

COMMUNiTY MEDIA REVIEW

**THE PEOPLE'S
GUIDE TO THE
TELECOM-
MUNICATIONS
ACT OF 2006**

**Part II
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For more than 15 years, the Alliance for Communications Democracy has been fighting to preserve and strengthen access. Though the odds against us have been high, and the mega-media, corporate foes well-heeled and powerful, time and again we've won in the courts. We can't continue this critical work without your support. With the ramifications of the 1996 Telecommunications Act still manifesting themselves, and new legislation on the horizon, we must be vigilant if we are to prevail and preserve democratic communications. If not us, who? If not now, when? Please join the Alliance for Communications Democracy today!

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As the journal of the Alliance for Community Media, *Community Media Review* shall support the Alliance mission by providing: a comprehensive overview of past, present and future issues critical to the Alliance and its membership; vigorous and thoughtful debate on those issues; and a venue for members and like-minded groups to present issues critical to the Alliance.

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Alliance for Community Media Testimony on Video Franchising

by *Anthony Riddle*

IT SEEMS A HUNDRED YEARS since the collapse of the Soviet Empire. The reality is that we were already working at that time on what became the 1996 Telecommunications Act. It was not so long ago.

The best way to secure the diversity of voices required of a democratic society is to create and support a free-standing, independent space for public dialogue. Congress did just that by providing for PEG facilities with financial support and placing them under the stewardship of local franchising authorities. What has blossomed in the past 30 years is a vital local communications resource that reflects the unique character of the thousands of cities, towns and hamlets which it serves.

The federal Cable Act authorizes local franchising authorities to require cable operators to set aside capacity on their systems for PEG use, and to require cable operators to provide, over and above the 5% cable franchise fee, funds for PEG capital equipment and facilities. The amount of PEG capacity that is set aside on a particular system, as well as the level of funding provided by the cable operator, is locally determined, based on each community's determination of its own particular cable-related community needs and interests.

The PEG provisions of the Cable Act are intended to provide all members of a community with access to the medium of television. Indeed, PEG is the only way that average citizens and community groups can interact in their communities via television. Particularly in this era of mass media consolidation, PEG Access ensures that locally-produced programming, of interest to and tailored to the particular local needs of the community, has an outlet on television.

PEG Access has served that purpose exceedingly well. Among other things, PEG provides:

- The only unmediated coverage Congress members receive in the home district
- Church outreach
- Coverage of local cultural activities
- The ability to maintain the local cultural identities of our towns, cities and counties
- Local governmental programming
- Local education programming
- Technical training and jobs
- News for military

General Principles for preserving Public Access in new legislation:

- Ease of Negotiation for New Entrants
- Local Authority to manage PROW fees
- Local Accountability
- Local Enforcement
- Local Design
- Technical Neutrality

Citizen Access to Broadband Communications:

Across the nation, PEG Access centers put television in the hands of the people, not as passive consumers, but as speakers and information providers — as citizens and other active participants in our society.

The public good and good business are not terms of contradiction. We ask that the nation strikes out into this brave new world of competition and creativity, of wealth and opportunity, that you take the time to preserve the only truly genuine form of localism and diversity in the television medium — public, educational and governmental access. We ask that any legislation preserve the essential role that only local governments can fill. We ask that you recognize PEG as a central means of preserving the rich tapestry of local character even as these changes move us toward a homogenized national identity.

What we ask of you is not asked for the purpose of our own enrichment. We ask out of love for a society and people that can be a beacon of freedom for all the people who will come after us. We ask that you include us as active participants in the many discussions to come in the drafting of this legislation. The Alliance looks forward to working with you to create legislation. On behalf of communities across the nation, we thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. **CMR**



Anthony Riddle is the Executive Director of the Alliance for Community Media.

This excerpt is from his testimony on video franchising before the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee, February 15, 2006.

Anthony can be reached at raiseeveryvoice@yahoo.com



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Make An Impact: Tell Your Story

by Mike Wassenaar

ACCESS TELEVISION CENTERS and community media centers have spent the last thirty years helping people tell their stories and express their opinions. It's the key reason why we exist.

And around the country, thousands of people each day use our centers in small towns and large cities to engage the public on some issue that matters.

So in a time of public policy ferment, what should the community television world do to help elected officials in Congress, in the State House or in City Hall make the right decisions to benefit our communities?

Like our producers, we should tell our story.

In Washington D.C., the Alliance for Community Media has been working hard to ensure the voice of access centers around the country is heard at the table as Congress and the Federal Communications Commission look at the future of video franchising in the United States. Testimony before the U.S. House and Senate in 2005 and 2006, along with testimony before the FCC as it weighs the nature of video competition, have helped shape the debate as we move forward. Every player at the table now acknowledges the value of public, educational and government access television. This is a far cry from where we were in early 2005. How has it happened?

First, persistence pays. At the national level, ACM has been able to work with policy partners interested in consumer and public interest, and with all sides of the aisle in Congress to talk about the value of community programming in *all* communities in the U.S. This message has been put forward by our national leadership in D.C. over many months. Rising above the clutter of information that hits every D.C. legislator takes persistence. Because of our belief in the mission of access television, we have been able to maintain that steady presence in Washington.

Second, it helps to be local. Our message of the value of community television has been propelled by continuing contact from our members across the country and access television supporters in every state who have demonstrated the value of community television to their Representatives and Senators. Access centers have hosted members of Congress in their studios during legislative recess. They have arranged visits by producers and other beneficiaries of our community work. And they have been tireless, arranging multiple visits either at home or in D.C.; arranging postcard pizza parties where

volunteers write personal messages to legislators; arranging local editorials and radio and television interviews; and arranging petition, e-mail and phone call drives. Never before has it been so apparent in the national media debate that localism is so important. People involved with ACM around the country are finding the message that media needs local control and content resounds with Americans across the country.

Finally, you can't buy authenticity. We may not have hundreds of lobbyists scouring the halls of Congress. But we do have people who trade in a coin everyone understands: authenticity. When a community producer tells a politician about the effect their program has had on the lives of thousands of viewers, it makes a real difference. You may be scared about what to say, how to say it, and all of the details, but politicians understand the need to listen to people in their district. This has been essential in building understanding of access television among policy makers.

And further, when a politician sees the effect of community television by participating in its production ... well, there is no price on that either. Why not invite a Congress member to a community taping at your facility when they are away from Washington? I have talked with Representatives and Senators who don't know access centers in their district as "community media." But they do know that center as their "local media" because they use it. We get hung up on terms and acronyms, but remember in the days ahead that all politics is local. Suddenly, we all have more powerful allies in the fight for local voices across the country.

Tell your story. Keep it local. Good things will happen. **CMR**



Mike Wassenaar is Executive Director of Saint Paul Neighborhood Network, and is the Chair of the National Board of the Alliance for Community Media.

Mike can be reached at wassenaar@spnn.org

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The Future of Democracy Depends on You

by *Lauren-Glenn Davitian*

THE PREDICTIONS ARE COMING TRUE: Congress is headed quickly toward a rewrite of U.S. telecommunications policy. The rewrite of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 started as soon as the law was signed by President Bill Clinton ten years ago. Whether the new version comes in small pieces of legislation or as a major bill, Congress is compelled by a number of factors to radically transform the way it classifies and regulates communications and media industries. Rapid changes in digital technologies, the global interests of the industries, the growing strength of the public interest sector and rulings by the FCC and Federal Courts all play a role in the ultimate overhaul of public policy that dates back to the Communications Act of 1934.

The predictions are coming true: At the same time that telephone companies actively seek cable franchises, they are working hard to bypass the local communities that issue them. Cable's biggest source of revenue growth now comes from telephone calls made over the internet (VoIP) — but unlike phone companies, they do not want to open their networks to competition. Communications and media companies — regulated as unique technologies for seven decades — are merging into one broadband industry. Separated since 1934 by different sets of regulation, the common carriers (telephone companies) and media (broadcast, cable, satellite) want their cake and to eat it too. They are lobbying Congress to create both the “level playing field” upon which they can compete *and* the policy protection that gives each of them the competitive edge.

The predictions are coming true: There is already talk of a “two-tiered” internet — faster service for customers of companies, such as Comcast and SBC, that control the internet gateways. And public access to digital content is actively being curtailed — from iTunes to movies-on-demand, customers are limited by the number of times they can record and view programs that they pay to use. We are moving to a “pay by the bit” economic model, controlled by a handful of companies working to maximize their profits through the use of public property.

While the captains of the media and communications industries seek to fully control the public rights-of-way and public spectrum, the many organizations of the media and communications reform movement are fighting to preserve access to, and use of, the “electronic green space.” There is no free speech or civic discourse without public access, consumer rights, commitments to diver-

sity and localism, and protections for privacy and copyrights.

In fact, the future of democracy depends upon the focused and successful work of local and national public interest organizations that seek to influence Congress, file comments with the FCC and take cases to Federal Court. Because we don't have the deep pockets and long-term friendships on Capitol Hill, we turn to “people power” — our ability to mobilize thousands and millions of our members, colleagues, friends and neighbors. Our message is detailed but it boils down to this: media and communications companies must serve “the public convenience and necessity” — as Congress required in 1934.

The People's Guide to the Telecommunications Act of 2006 (PG I), published in September 2005, explains the technology, regulation and politics that influence U.S. media and communications policy. This Activist Resource Guide (PG II), the companion issue to PG I, provides a close look at how policy is influenced, summarizes the key public policy positions of the public interest movement, and provides a “toolkit” that you can start using *now* to protect the “electronic green-space” for your community and for the nation.

Once each of us accepts responsibility for being an activist, there is hope that, together, we can preserve free speech, public access, civic discourse and communities worth living in. Democracy depends on you. **cMR**



Lauren-Glenn Davitian is Executive Director of CCTV Center for Media and Democracy in Vermont

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I. Making of U.S. Communications & Media Policy

U.S. communications and media policy is spelled out in the Communications Act of 1934 — a product of 70 years of amendments, including the Telecommunications Act of 1996. While Congress is the source of legislation, laws are interpreted by both the FCC and the Federal Courts. And while the telecom-

munications industry is well represented in each of these three arenas (by lobbyists and lawyers), policy reform depends on the ability of citizen activists to mobilize “people power” to protect free speech, public access, consumer rights and democracy itself.



Congress created the **FCC** (the Federal Communications Commission) to regulate communications by radio, television, wire, satellite and cable, and to protect the public interest. Congress passes legislation and sends it to the FCC to interpret and implement.

Congress: The Lawmakers
thomas.loc.gov

Most of the power associated with communications and media bills rests with Congressional committees — the Senate Commerce Committee and the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Ultimate “reconciliation” of a proposed bill occurs in the Conference Committee, made up of House and Senate appointees. Committee chairs, members and staff influence the intent and details of legislation. In some cases, media and communications bills are attached to unrelated bills and signed into law. Congressional decisions are highly influenced by campaign contributions. *To learn more, see page 14.*

Public Interest Advocates

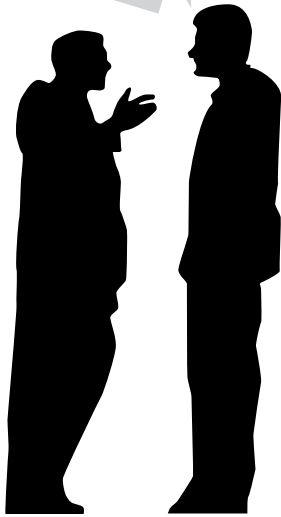
Public interest advocates play an essential role at every phase of the process. They articulate the public interest position, mobilize “people power,” and fight to protect the public’s use of spectrum (airwaves used by broadcasters, cellular and satellite services) and rights-of-way (used by telephone and cable companies). *To learn more, see Sections II, III, and IV.*





FCC: The Regulators
www.fcc.gov

When Congress passed the 1934 Communications Act to regulate telephone and radio industries, it also created the FCC to license and regulate these companies for the “public convenience and necessity.” The FCC is charged with working out the details of media and communication legislation and creates rules that regulate the business practices of the industry. In some cases, these decisions have been challenged and end up in the Federal Courts. *To learn more, see page 21.*



Industry Lobbyists

With deep pockets, the communications and media industry is heavily represented in each of these three areas of decision-making.

If industry or public interest advocates are not satisfied with the courts’ decisions, the legislation often returns to **Congress**. Debate and the political process help to build on existing laws and create new ones.

For the past seventy years, arguments about FCC interpretations have been ruled on by the **Federal Courts**. Once the courts have made their determinations, the rules are returned to the FCC for revision and implementation.

Federal Courts: The Adjudicators
www.uscourts.gov

FCC decisions that have been challenged, such as the FCC’s decision to lift broadcast ownership limits, are the purview of the Federal Courts. If these rulings are appealed, media and communications policy may make its way to the Supreme Court. The courts will interpret the ultimate intent of Congress and return the rules to the FCC for revision and implementation. *To learn more, see page 23.*





“The American people need to play an active role in the rewriting of the 1996 Telecommunications Act. I encourage them to contact their representatives in Congress and the White House, either via phone, fax or email, and express to members of Congress and the White House what is most important to them and what they would like to see included in the new bill. I also encourage Americans to meet with their Congressman, or a staff member, either in the Congressional districts or in Washington. The more Americans who contact their representatives, the greater role they will have in shaping this legislation.”

*Congressman
Bernie Sanders (I-VT)*

Rep. Sanders is deeply involved in media reform, along with a handful of legislators that range from Senator John McCain (R-AZ) to Representative Maxine Waters (D-CA) and other members of the Progressive Media Caucus.

*Find out more about Sanders' position on corporate media.
www.bernie.house.gov/corporate_media/index.asp*

THE LAWMAKERS

U.S. Congress

TWO CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES, namely the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee (“Senate Commerce Committee”) and House Energy and Commerce Committee, hold the political power to amend U.S. media and communications laws. Committee and subcommittee chairs, members, and staff craft the intent and details of any amendments to the **Communications Act of 1934**. Changes to the “1934 Act” can be made as minor amendments or as major bills such as the **Cable Act of 1984** and the **Telecommunications Act of 1996**. (It is unclear what form current — 2006 — rewrites will take.)

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ACTION

Congressman Joe Barton (R-TX) is the current Chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. House bills are introduced under his supervision through the Telecommunications and Internet Subcommittee, chaired by Fred Upton (R-MI). Subcommittee members hold hearings and work to “mark up” telecommunications and internet bills, voting amendments up or down, until they are voted out of the subcommittee and sent to the full Energy and Commerce Committee. Chairman Barton presides over these hearings and mark-ups at the full committee level. Because of the Chairman’s personal interest and his membership in the Republican majority, the bill will be voted to the “floor of the House.” (It is not necessary to go through the full Committee to get to the floor — but more likely to take this route.)

FLOOR ACTION

On the “floor of the House,” the Rules Committee decides whether amendments to the bill will be heard by Congress. The Democrats’ ability to amend any bill depends upon the willingness of the Repub-

licans who have the majority in the Rules Committee.

The House must take a vote “up or down” on the bill with its final amendments. If passed by a majority, it is sent, along with a Senate version, to the Conference Committee for “reconciliation.” Members appointed by the House and Senate (with a Republican majority), iron out the differences in the bill. If a majority of conferees sign the reconciliation, a Conference Report is sent back to the two chambers. The reconciled bill cannot be amended and is subject to a strict “up or down” vote by both House and Senate; decisions in both chambers are based on a simple majority of votes.

U.S. SENATE: THE SHORT STORY

The Senate Commerce Committee is co-chaired by Senator Ted Stevens (R-AL) and Senator Daniel Inouye (D-HI). The Subcommittee on Technology, Innovation and Competitiveness is chaired by Senator John Ensign (R-NM). In the Senate, the “life of a bill” follows a process similar to the House, although the Senate tends to work more efficiently. The prospect of a “filibuster” on the Senate floor may lead the Senators to work more cooperatively. Also, the Senate Rules Committee does not have the authority to limit amendments to the bill before it reaches the floor of the Senate.

PRESIDENTIAL ACTION

If the final draft passes in both chambers, the bill is sent to the President. If the President signs the bill, it then becomes a law. It may also become a law if the President does not sign it for 10 days. If the President rejects (vetoes) the bill, it can still become a law if two-thirds of the Senate and two-thirds of the House then vote in favor of the bill.

Follow the Money: Influence & Media Tracker

WHILE INDUSTRY LOBBYISTS pay for access and influence, public interest advocates mobilize “people power” with grassroots strategies and innovative electronic tools. One such tool is, “Well Connected,” an ongoing investigation, conducted by the Center for Public Integrity, of the businesses that control the nation’s information pipelines and of their government overseers.

Ever wondered who owns your favorite radio and television stations? Or how much is spent by giant broadcasters like News Corp. and Viacom to lobby members of Congress? Or whether the top executives at those companies prefer Democrats over Republicans — or vice versa?

For answers to those questions, and many more, go to www.publicintegrity.org/telecom.

After logging on to the site, you will see two main searches — the Media Tracker, which is a broadcast ownership search, and the Influence Tracker, which is designed to track political influence.

The Media Tracker is a 51,870-record searchable database consisting of every radio and television station, every cable television system and every major newspaper in the United States. Simply punch in a zip code or a city and you are off. Click on the company, and you will discover all kinds of information, including corporate profits, executive salaries, other media holdings and even how much the companies spend on lobbying and corporate contributions. If you are strictly interested in the political money game, go directly to the Influence Tracker. The Tracker will tell you who is giving and who is receiving campaign contributions, how much media firms are spending to lobby the government and wine and dine legislators, and who is whirling through the revolving door between government and industry.

www.publicintegrity.org/telecom

Resource Directory

Find out how bills are made
bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/lawmaking/example.html

Track national legislation
thomas.loc.gov

Will Public Access TV Go Dark?

by Michael Clancy

PEOPLE WHO PRESENT THEIR TV shows on Manhattan Neighborhood Network, Brooklyn Cable Access Television, and other such systems nationwide, could be silenced if and when cable TV is made available on a nationwide franchising basis. Nationwide, some 1.2 million volunteers and 250,000 community groups who produce the grassroots programming could be blacked out.

“There’s an African proverb that says, ‘When the elephants fight, the grass gets trampled,’” said Anthony Riddle of the Alliance for Community Media, a group dedicated to preserving public access nationwide.

Phone companies argue that the 30,000 franchise agreements that cable companies have negotiated with municipalities are simply too burdensome. It’s those franchise agreements that give

municipalities leeway in negotiations because cable companies use public rights-of-way to run their lines. Cities and towns get a chunk of cable revenue and bandwidth as part of those agreements.

But the system has been shaken by rapid technological change. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 has been rendered nearly obsolete by high-speed internet connections. In short, the law must be and will be changed — the question is how, and that outcome will shape the fate of public access TV.

AM New York (excerpt)
www.amny.com/news/local/newyork/am-tv0221,0,7968934.story?coll=am-top-headlines

“**W**hen the elephants fight, the grass gets trampled.”

African proverb

Meet the Key Players
and Follow the
Latest News

**The National Journal’s
Telecom Insider Update**
www.njtelecomupdate.com

Multichannel News
www.multichannel.com
(requires a subscription)

**Contact your Congress-
member**
[www.freepress.net/
washington](http://www.freepress.net/washington)

Legislative Talking Points: What to say to your Congressperson when you meet them

These talking points were developed by the Alliance for Community Media for its members to speak to their national legislators about the draft bills in U.S. House and Senate telecommunications committees in late 2005. Talking points boil down the broader message into key "sticky" points. These talking points addressed the problems with an un-numbered House bill, BITS — Broadband Internet Transmission Service. www.alliancecm.org

- The Alliance for Community Media, and other representatives of the public interest, must be included in hearings and conversations about this bill.
 - Local governments want broadband for their communities and embrace innovations in technology that make possible competition in video, telephone and broadband services.
 - Community resource obligations of communications providers must continue to apply:
 - Public, education, government access capacity;
 - Institutional networks;
 - Economic red-lining should be prohibited;
 - Public safety and community needs.
 - Consumers must receive a choice of broadband providers with a guarantee of net neutrality.
 - State and local governments should maintain public rights-of-way management control and be kept whole in terms of social obligations and user fees.
- Problems with the current legislation and process:**
- While the telcos gets their fast-track franchising process, everyone else loses.
 - Consumers are no longer guaranteed a choice of broadband providers. Competitors can now buy out their competition.
 - There is no more net neutrality; broadband providers can block competitive information services from the system. Cable is required under this bill to repay cities with support of community such as PEG and I-Nets, while telcos are not.
 - BITS limits franchise fees to the recovery of public rights-of-way management costs. Furthermore, franchise fees are limited to 5% of subscriber revenue, not the 5% of gross revenues which is standard today.
 - Franchising is not, and never has been, a barrier to competition. In fact, cable companies are out-deploying telcos even though cable companies have local franchises. More broadband has been deployed under local cable franchises than by telcos.
 - Current law is a light touch regulatory approach.

Alliance Testimony on Video Franchising

THE ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY MEDIA IS IN FAVOR of competition. But the FCC must be extraordinarily careful in changing rules which have successfully provided the tools of democracy to our communities. We want to see competition add active new participants in PEG access. Competition should not merely carve up an existing pool of video watchers. Competition should not be for the hope of saving a few dollars per year on a cable bill at the expense of priceless community involvement in expression, education or personal engagement in government.

Competition should not be used as an excuse to lower or escape existing and

reasonable public obligations. PEG channel capacity should grow and change as the technology changes and community-need increases. PEG funding should be secured at reasonable levels over and above the 5% franchise fees.

We want competition which allows the community to retain communications capacity. We believe competition can flourish in a system which respects a community's right to determine how best to use that capacity. We believe that the people who own the public rights-of-way deserve to collect fair payment from companies gaining huge fortunes through their use.

from testimony by Sharon King, President and CEO Dallas Community Television, on video franchising before the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee, February 10, 2006. www.alliancecm.org/news.php?news_id=54

Sharon can be reached at sking@dctvdallas.org

The Fallout from the Telecommunications Act of 1996:

Unintended consequences and lessons learned

IN MANY WAYS, THE TELECOM ACT OF 1996 failed to serve the public and did not deliver on its promise of more competition, more diversity, lower prices, more jobs and a booming economy. Instead, the public got more media concentration, less diversity, and higher prices. Over 10 years, the legislation was supposed to save consumers \$550 billion, including \$333 billion in lower long distance rates, \$32 billion in lower local phone rates, and \$78 billion in lower cable bills. But cable rates have surged by about 50 percent, and local phone rates went up more than 20 percent. Industries supporting the new legislation predicted it would add 1.5 million jobs and boost the economy by \$2 trillion. By 2003, however, telecommunications companies' market value had fallen by about \$2 trillion, and they had shed half a million jobs.

And study after study has documented that profit-driven media conglomerates are investing less in news and information, and that local news in particular is failing to provide viewers with the information they need to participate in their democracy. Why did this happen? In some cases, industries agreed to the terms of the Act and then went to court to block them.

By leaving regulatory discretion to the Federal Communications Commission, the Act gave the FCC the power to issue rules that often sabotaged the intent of Congress. Control of the House passed from Democrats to Republicans, more sympathetic to corporate arguments for deregulation. And while corporate special interests all had a seat at the table when this bill was being negotiated, the public did not. Nor were average citizens even aware of this legislation's great impact on how they got their entertainment and information, and whether it would foster or discourage diversity of viewpoints and a marketplace of ideas, crucial to democratic discourse.

Now, as Congress once again takes up major legislation to change telecommunications policy, and as it revisits the 1996 Telecom Act, major industries have had nearly a decade to reinforce their relationships with

lawmakers and the Administration through political donations and lobbying.

- Since 1997, just eight of the country's largest and most powerful media and telecommunications companies, their corporate parents, and three of their trade groups, have spent more than \$400 million on political contributions and lobbying in Washington, according to a Common Cause analysis of federal records.
- Verizon Communications, SBC Communications, Inc., AOL/Time Warner, General Electric Co./NBC, News Corp./Fox, Viacom/CBS, Comcast Corp., Walt Disney Co./ABC, the National Association of Broadcasters, the National Cable & Telecommunications Association, and the United States Telecom Association together gave nearly \$45 million in federal political donations since 1997. Of that total, \$17.8 million went to Democrats and \$26.9 million went to Republicans.
- These eight companies and three trade associations also spent more than \$358 million on lobbying in Washington since 1998, when lobbying expenditures were first required to be disclosed. All this investment once again gives radio and television broadcasters, telephone companies, long distance providers, cable systems and internet companies a huge advantage over average citizens.

While these corporations have different, and sometimes opposing, views on individual provisions of a new Telecom Act, their overriding desire is for less federal regulation. A new Telecommunications Act could be written "in a matter of months, not years," and be a "very short bill," focused on an almost complete deregulation of the telecommunications industry, said F. Duane Ackerman, chairman and CEO of BellSouth Corporation. "The basic issue before the Congress is simple," Ackerman said, "Can competition do a better job than traditional utility regulation?"

THE FALLOUT FROM THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT is a report issued by Common Cause in May 2005. The twenty-four page report analyzes the impact of the 1996 Act in preparation for its rewrite in Congress. www.commoncause.org/atf/cf/{FB3C17E2-CDD1-4DF6-92BE-BD4429893665}/FALLOUT_FROM_THE_TELECOMM_ACT_5-9-05.PDF

“The basic issue before the Congress is simple: Can competition do a better job than traditional utility regulation?”

F. Duane Ackerman
CEO BellSouth

Commentary: Congressional Copycats

by Celia Viggo Wexler

Celia Viggo Wexler is Vice President for Advocacy for Common Cause.

Celia can be reached at cwexler@commoncause.org

This editorial was printed in the Los Angeles Times on December 30, 2005.

“While the openness of the internet is universally praised, it is no longer guaranteed, at least for broadband services. Recent Supreme Court and FCC rulings define broadband networks as unregulated ‘information services,’ which means that the operators of broadband networks are no longer under any legal obligation to keep their networks open to all internet content, services and equipment.”

Public Knowledge
publicknowledge.org

HOLLYWOOD ALREADY CONTROLS most of what Americans see on TV. Now a pair of representatives in Washington want to help Hollywood control how Americans see it — whether on their TV or some other new device. As a matter of both law and marketing, it’s a bad idea.

In the waning days of the 2005 session, Reps. F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr. (R-WI.) and John Conyers, Jr. (D-MI) quietly introduced, on Hollywood’s command, legislation that would require new computers, TV sets and video recorders to limit copying. The bill targets the so-called analog hole, a security vulnerability present when there are conventional analog connections between devices — a TV, say, and a VCR. Newer devices have digital connectors that allow entertainment companies to scramble audio and video signals and thus protect themselves against illicit copying.

The bill aims to prevent pirates from slipping through the analog hole to copy movies or television programs, then converting them into digital files that could be swapped on the internet or burned onto DVDs. It would require any new device that receives an analog video signal — including TV tuners, computers and TiVos — to be equipped with technology to limit copying and redistribution online.

The measure, which is expected to draw fire from some computer and consumer-electronics companies, would give Hollywood unprecedented control over what people do with the programs that come into their homes. Studios could force TiVos and other digital recorders to erase pay-per-view or on-demand movies stored for more than 90 minutes. New computers could be prevented from showing copy-protected programs, such as a movie downloaded from an online store, in high definition.

The studios have an understandable interest in combating piracy. But Congress should not be mandating the technolo-

gies used to fight it, particularly when they aren’t proven. As Sony BMG learned when it used a new technology to prevent CDs from being copied, unanticipated glitches can inflict more than enough pain to offset any reduction in illegal copying.

At any rate, this legislation won’t stop determined video pirates, who will find other ways to make bootlegs. Its effect would be mainly on typical TV viewers, who would be prevented from doing a number of things they expect to be able to do with video. Maybe you’re an HBO subscriber who recorded an episode of “Curb Your Enthusiasm” to watch on the bus the next morning on your way to work. Today, you can use analog connectors to convert that recording into a digital file suitable for your iPod or Sony PSP. If the bill became law, the tools needed for the conversion would be illegal.

Supporters of the legislation acknowledge that Hollywood needs to give people more ways to watch shows at the time and place of their choosing. And there are signs that Hollywood is getting the message, given the recent flurry of deals between the networks and the companies that deliver their programming. Yet today the only legal way to put the contents of a DVD you own onto the hard drive of your PC, DVR or iPod is through analog connectors.

Such connectors are gradually disappearing from TVs and video recorders anyway, so this “hole” will eventually close on its own. In the meantime, if the goal is to deter illegal copying, Hollywood should work harder to help viewers watch what they want when they want to. And Congress should understand that piracy cannot be curbed simply by giving Hollywood more control.

Municipal Resolution in Support of Local Franchising Authority

WHEREAS, three bills have been introduced into the 109th Congress of the United States that would prevent the City of Chicago from requiring providers of cable and video services that use City rights-of-way from having to obtain a franchise from the City and thus prevent the City from meeting local community needs; and

WHEREAS, under the guise of public choice and increased competition, these bills would nationalize franchising, setting a course toward preemption of all local authority over the provision of cable and video services within the community; and

WHEREAS, these bills would reduce or eliminate financial and technical support that is critical to the City of Chicago and to the creation of local programs through public, educational and governmental access; and

WHEREAS, these bills eliminate any build-out requirements for any video service provider, thereby allowing providers to discriminate based on the wealth of the local neighborhoods they choose to serve; and

WHEREAS, these bills would deprive Chicago residents of the ability to address issues locally by removing to the state and federal government all customer service issues, transferring local enforcement of franchise issues to the federal bureaucracies and courts; and

WHEREAS, the City of Chicago supports competition, diversity and localism in media with a level playing field where everyone plays by the same rules to accomplish those goals; and

WHEREAS, local cable franchising allows for cities and towns around the country to exercise local authority, decision-making and consumer protection, to establish and support commercial-free community television, and to receive franchise fees that private companies pay as compensation for their use of local public rights-of-way; and

WHEREAS, under existing law telephone companies are free to enter the video market today as common carriers, as open video service providers, or under the same local franchising framework as cable companies; and

WHEREAS, the City objects to legislation that creates a subsidy to the telecommunications industry at the expense of the City's taxpayers;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, THAT WE, THE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO, for the reasons stated above urge the Illinois Congressional Delegation and all other members of Congress to oppose Senate bills S. 1349 and S. 1504 and House bill H.R. 3146. The City Council directs that this Resolution be forwarded immediately to the members of the Illinois Congressional Delegation and other members of Congress as deemed appropriate.

This resolution was introduced to the Chicago City Council on September 14, 2005 by Chicago's Vice Mayor, Bernard Stone and Finance Committee Chair, Ed Burke. CAN-TV played a major role in getting this on the agenda. For more information, contact Barbara Popovic bpopovic@cantv.org

LPFM Community Advances Legislation in Congress

by Hannah Sassaman

Hannah Sassaman is a lead organizer with the Prometheus Radio Project.

Hannah can be reached at hannahjs@prometheusradio.org.

“ [LPFM implementation has been] severely hampered by commercial broadcasters’ flagrantly exaggerated claims of interference. The most recent obstruction, a two-year study conducted at the behest of broadcasters, cost taxpayers over two million dollars and proved what the FCC and community groups have known for years: Low Power FM stations will not cause significant interference to other broadcasters’ signals. It is time for broadcasters to stop hiding behind false claims of interference when they are really afraid of the competition from truly local broadcasters.”

Senator John McCain (R-AZ), Senate Commerce Committee, on the introduction of the Local Community Radio Act of 2005

AFTER FIVE YEARS of the new low power FM radio service, there are over 675 low power FM (LPFM) stations live today in the United States — all because of the great work of organizers like you who understand the power of community media. Sometimes I like to sit back and imagine the launch of each new station — that moment of silence when the crackle turns into a voice, the call letters giving way to music for the first time. This year, WRFU went live, broadcasting everything from urban beats to progressive personal finance out of a huge old postal building in Urbana, Illinois. KDEE, the Black Chamber of Commerce’s station in Sacramento, California, covers news and politics from the perspective of the only African-American nonprofit in the state licensed to broadcast. And KPCN, the community radio station of the Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste, will be going live this summer — another tool in the hands of Oregon’s ground-breaking farmworker and treeplanter organizers. Low power FM is doing great — powerful groups are building stations — but we need thousands more.

In 2000, when we won a sliver of the airwaves for communities all across the United States, the National Association of Broadcasters and National Public Radio threw a wrench in our plans. They convinced Congress to prevent the FCC from giving out licenses to hundreds of applicants, claiming that new 100-watt community stations would interfere with the big broadcasters’ 100,000 watt juggernauts if they landed in slots too close to them on the dial. That meant that there was only one LPFM in the top forty markets — low power radio became a rural service!

But two years ago, the FCC came back with an independent study conducted by the MITRE corporation, proving, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that there was no potential of an LPFM station interfering with a full power station in the slots forbidden them. With \$2.2 million in U.S.

taxes spent, and hundreds of community groups clamoring for their chance to take to the airwaves, the FCC made its recommendation to Congress: now is the time to expand LPFM.

And Congress is beginning to respond. Senators John McCain, Patrick Leahy, and Maria Cantwell co-sponsored Senate Bill 312 last year. And this past Fall, Congresswoman Louise Slaughter, and other members of the Future of American Media Caucus in the House of Representatives, proposed another bill (House Bill 3731). We’ll need both the House and the Senate to vote to expand LPFM if we want to bring stations to hundreds more communities, so now’s the time to start calling our legislators!

What’s our strategy, you ask? To push these congressional leaders in their home states, in partnership with the groups who were left out of the first and only chance for low power radio, and with new allies working on social justice. The more Congressmembers and Senators we can get to understand that community radio stations have a place in every city or town, the more likely we are to expand this service to reach Food not Bombs’ community centers, conservative youth ministries — everybody.

We’ll be headed to Michigan in early Spring to help convince John Dingell, the Democratic House member who limited low power radio to rural communities, that there are dozens of communities in his district working for LPFM and community media. If you want to organize a district visit, don’t hesitate to call!

Prometheus has built a webtool (www.prometheusradio.org/lpfm) that will allow you to look up your legislators, set up appointments with them, and tell them what’s what over the phone or in a letter. If you’re rarin’ to go, and you want your Congressperson to sponsor this new legislation, give us a call at 215.727.9620, and ask to speak to Hannah. Together we can bring Low Power FM to communities all across the country.

THE REGULATORS

Federal Communications Commission



THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS Commission (FCC), is an independent United States government agency, directly responsible to Congress. The FCC was established by the **Communications Act of 1934** and is charged with regulating interstate and international communications by radio, television, wire, satellite and cable. The FCC's jurisdiction covers the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. possessions.

ORGANIZATION

The FCC is directed by five Commissioners appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Commissioners serve five-year terms, except when filling an unexpired term. The President designates one of the Commissioners to serve as Chair. Only three Commissioners may be members of the same political party. None of them may have a financial interest in any Commission-related business.

As the chief executive officer of the Commission, the Chair delegates management and administrative responsibility to the Managing Director. The Commissioners supervise all FCC activities, delegating responsibilities to Staff Offices and Bureaus.

BUREAUS AND OFFICES

The Commission staff is organized by function. There are six operating Bureaus and ten Staff Offices. The Bureaus' responsibilities include: processing applications for licenses and other filings; analyzing complaints; conducting investigations; developing and implementing regulatory programs; and taking part in hearings. Staff Offices provide support services. Even though the Bureaus and Offices have their individual functions, they regularly join forces and share expertise in addressing Commission issues. from www.fcc.gov

FCC RESOURCE DIRECTORY

MEDIA ACTIVIST GUIDE TO THE FCC

This short primer from **Prometheus Radio Project** is intended to help interested citizens understand the way that the back-room deals that govern our media are made, and to give them a can opener with which they can let loose the worms of public outrage that the big business lobbyists have been trying to keep in the can. www.prometheusradio.org/media_activists_guide.shtml

HOW TO FILE COMMENTS WITH THE FCC

The FCC website provides an automated way to make public comments on each of their proceedings. **Electronic Comment Filing System Express (ECFS)** also provides a list of the dockets currently open for comment. www.fcc.gov/cgb/ecfs

FCC CONSUMER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The FCC's **Consumer Advisory Committee** is charged with consumer protection. Its focus is on customer service. In 2005, the CAC gained a higher profile with its most recent set of appointments, including Charles Benton (Benton Foundation) and Denis Moynihan (Democracy Now!). These and other public interest advocates are using the CAC as an opportunity to educate and organize the reform community. www.fcc.gov/cgb/cac

FCC Commissioners

Kevin J. Martin – R
Chair

Michael J. Copps – D

Jonathan S. Adelstein – D

Deborah Taylor Tate – R

Republican appointee pending

Q. "What is your agenda?"

A. "Over the last year, we've been able to do a couple of important things. As technology changes, companies want to get into each others' businesses. Cable trying to provide telephone service, telephone wants to try cable, all are trying to provide high-speed internet connections.

Our regulations had at times treated these companies differently. We now have to create a level playing field. We're also making sure we address some public interest obligations: allowing for more competition while protecting consumers."

FCC Chair
Kevin Martin

The Promise Of People Power:

Two million oppose broadcast ownership rules

AS PART OF THE 1996 Telecommunications Act, Congress required the FCC to review its broadcast ownership rules to determine “whether any of such rules are necessary in the public interest as a result of competition.” In April 2003, Democratic FCC Commissioners Michael Coops and Jonathan Adelstein barnstormed communities across the United States with a timely warning about Chair Michael Powell’s intent to change, by June 2003, broadcast ownership limits in favor of consolidation. The message of media consolidation galvanized the media reform community and gripped the American public. Grassroots and “beltway” organizations joined together to mobilize more than 2 million comments

to the FCC. These comments expressed opposition to changes in ownership rules for multiple media properties, including national TV networks, local broadcast affiliates, radio stations and newspapers. In spite of these comments, Chairman Powell and his three Republican colleagues lifted the caps. Media Access Project and Prometheus Radio asked the U.S. Court of Appeals (Third Circuit) to throw out the new rules. Citing irreparable harm and the overwhelming public opposition, the Court stayed the FCC ruling.

For more on the case and outcomes, look for “Legal Filings” at Media Access Project’s website.

www.mediaaccess.org

FCC Takes On Cable Competition: Comments for the FCC notice of public rulemaking on video franchises

THE FCC ISSUED a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (“NPRM”) to determine if the franchising of cable TV by local governments is an “unreasonable barrier to entry” for telephone companies that also want to provide video services to local communities (MB Docket 05-311). To this end, the FCC sought comments from local governments (and others) on “what can be done to ensure that local franchising authorities (LFAs) do not unreasonably refuse to award cable franchises to competitive entrants.”

Through the combined organizing efforts of the Alliance for Community Media (www.alliancecm.org), countless access leaders, and Free Press (www.freepress.net), nearly four thousand comments were filed with the FCC by February 13, 2006. See sidebar **Access Centers Sound the Alert!** for examples of how access centers helped mobilize the media community.

In addition to the written comments, Anthony Riddle (Executive Director, ACM) and Sharon King (CEO and President, Dallas Community Television) testified on this issue before the Senate Commerce Committee. An excerpt of Mr. Riddle’s testimony appears on page 7, and an excerpt of Ms. King’s appears on page 16. For the full text of Ms. King’s and Mr. Riddle’s testimony, see the Alliance for Community Media website.

www.alliancecm.org

Access Centers Sound the Alert!

Access Centers help mobilize the community by spreading the word about pending legislation and FCC hearings. Following are links to a few online sources of information:

Manhattan Neighborhood Network
mnn.org/saveaccess/index.html

CCTV Salem, Oregon
www.cctvsalem.org/action_alert.php

Chicago Access Network – CAN TV
www.cantv.org/callactn.htm

Portland Community Media
www.pcmtv.org/call_to_action.php

THE ADJUDICATORS

Federal Courts



Brand X and Grokster

FCC DECISIONS are generally appealed to the U.S. Circuit Courts and further appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. The Court is asked to rule on the jurisdiction of the FCC to make decisions as well as the property rights of the industry. The Brand X and Grokster decisions are good examples of how the process works.

The Supreme Court heard the Brand X case on March 29, 2005. This case is a major factor in the future of broadband competition. Brand X puts three major associations against the consumers and independent internet service providers (ISPs). The FCC and National Cable & Telecommunications Association want to limit access to the cable networks to independent ISPs, while folks like Earth-

link say that they should be allowed to sell their broadband services over cable networks. In June 2005, the Court ruled that the FCC had the authority to classify cable as an “information service” rather than a “telecommunications service.” In short: Unlike telephone companies, cable operators are not required to open their networks to competing internet service providers.

How to regulate two distinct industries (telephone and cable) that now compete for broadband business is one of the major policy issues facing Congress today. CCTV maintains a broad and varied list of references on the subject.

www.cctv.org/cmrbrandx.htm

Waving Flags of Victory: Broadcast Flag Decision

IN A UNANIMOUS DECISION, the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals tossed out the broadcast flag, the FCC rule that would have crippled digital television receivers starting July 1, 2006. The ruling came in *ALA v. FCC*, a challenge brought by Public Knowledge, EFF, Consumers Union, the Consumer Federation of America, the American Library Association, the Association of Research Libraries, the American Association of Law Libraries, the Medical Library Association, and the Special Libraries Association. www.eff.org/broadcastflag

The tagging of digital content for the purpose of limiting access has returned to Congress in the form of **The Digital Transition Security Act of 2005**. Public Knowledge is on the forefront of promoting public control of electronic content. Read Gigi Sohn’s testimony on “Broadcast and Audio Flag” to the Senate Commerce Committee in January 2006.

www.publicknowledge.org/issues/broadcastflag

Resource Directory

Media Access Project

MAP is a thirty-year old nonprofit tax-exempt public interest telecommunications law firm. Their summaries of legal and regulatory issues are particularly helpful for media and communications activists.

www.mediaaccess.org

Center for Internet & Society

The Center, part of the Law, Science and Technology Program at Stanford Law School, focuses on legal doctrine that will determine the course of civil rights and technological innovation.

cyberlaw.stanford.edu

Free Expression Policy Project

The Project is part of the Democracy Program at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law. The Project provides research and advocacy on free speech, copyright, and media democracy issues. www.fepproject.org/index.html

Free Speech or Free Ride?

How we stopped the Arizona legislature from legislating favorable terms for cable providers

by *Mary Okoye*

Mary Okoye is Director of Intergovernmental Relations, City of Tucson.

Mary can be reached at Mary.Okoye@tucsonaz.gov

The Farm League: State Legislative Battles

Since January 2005, state legislatures have been the pre-game show for phone companies seeking to bypass local franchising authorities and telecommunications companies seeking to prohibit municipal broadband. The Baller Herbst Law Group tracks these legislative battles. www.baller.com/comm/broadband.html

Free Press provides policy background and an up-to-date map on the state battlegrounds at the Community Internet section of its website. www.freepress.net/communityinternet/=states

To find out how much money big telecom companies are spending in your state on lobbying and campaign donations, check out the Center for Public Integrity's "Well Connected," and select your state from the list. www.publicintegrity.org/telecom

COX CABLE, a privately held company doing business in Arizona, began introducing legislation a few years ago to level the playing field against their satellite system competitors (DBS). Cox argued that DBS increased its market share by offering lower prices to consumers — prices that Cox would not offer because they were “burdened” with high local government franchise fees and public concessions (such as PEG channels and in-kind arrangements). Cox tried to engage the League of Arizona Cities and Towns in an attempt to convince the Arizona state legislature to tax DBS. While the cities were sympathetic, the legislation did not gain traction, due to the anti-tax sentiment, and requirements for two-thirds of the legislature to support taxation measures.

In 2004, Cox made a final attempt to have the legislature allocate a DBS tax to first responders (emergency services). This effort failed to capture the imagination of the Arizona legislature.

At the beginning of the 2005 legislative year, Cox and the Arizona Cable Television Association (ACTA) launched an impressive public relations, government relations, and media campaign to persuade consumers, the legislature, and local elected officials that Arizona franchising and licensing agreements create an unfair competitive environment for Cox Cable and cost consumers money. At the same time, Cox brokered a deal with Arizona legislative leadership and key legislators to pass a measure to cap franchise fees at 3% (down from 5%), and PEG channels at 2%. This would have resulted in a loss to the City of Tucson of 7 PEG channels and at least \$2.1 million annually. It would have been a loss to local governments throughout the state of at least \$30 million per year. Cox did not dispute those losses.

Cox hired several lobbying firms to augment their efforts at the state Capitol. Identical bills were introduced simultaneously in the House and Senate and put on the fast track for hearing and passage. If both bills had passed their house of introduction without amendments, they would have swiftly ascended to the Governor's desk for passage or veto.

The City of Tucson and Access Tucson launched an aggressive state-wide effort to stop the legislation in both houses. The City of Peoria worked tirelessly to pick off votes that the cable industry had garnered.

Public access audiences and programmers were recruited to contact their legislators throughout the state. Sam Behrend of Access Tucson and Mary Canty of the Tucson Unified School District traveled over 200 miles round trip to the State Capitol three times in three weeks to set the record straight and to explain the importance of public access. The Arizona League of Cities and Towns Executive Director and Legislative Director were also available to present testimony at these hearings.

In addition to the argument that local government's high franchise fees were costing consumers money, Cox also accused Access Tucson of unsavory programming. This tactic was an ironic one, since adult programming is one of cable's most profitable products. Cox was incensed when the City of Tucson and Access Tucson informed legislators that Access Tucson had strict adult programming guidelines; mature content was not allowed on air until after midnight. This was not the case with commercial cable providers such as Cox.

Cox also told legislators that Tucson had as many as 22 PEG channels. Tucson has nine. Cox bought the Tucson system

from TCI, knowing how many public access channels were included in that initial franchise agreement! This revelation shocked many legislators.

Several national media, cable, local government, and consumer associations including NATOA, Common Cause, Democracy Now! and Free Press helped Arizona municipalities with their effort to stop the legislation. They worked together to contact, inform, and mobilize their Arizona members to urge local legislators to vote no on the bills. The state legislature's perception of public access changed when they were contacted by ministers, prominent citizens, and educators — a diverse cross-section of their voter base. As a result, the House bill passed by just five votes. This was impressive, since all of the Arizona cities were not engaged at this point and Cox had obtained commitments from many legislators. In one of my many conversations with legislative offices I was told, "We know to vote 'no,' I've already received over 600 emails on this topic!" One legislator said that our efforts broke her email three times. Only one of the twelve Tucson-area legislators voted for this bill.

Approximately three-quarters of the way through the session, the Senate President, Ken Bennett, contacted the Arizona League of Cities to broker a deal. The offer was as follows: a phased-in 4% franchise fee and two PEG channels. After swift discussion, the Arizona cities declined the offer. Arizona's cities, the City of Tucson included, were not willing to slash their public access channels 50% or more.

The League of Cities & Towns hosted a rally on the Capitol lawn on April 4, 2005. Local government leaders, schools and public access television stakeholders from across the state attended the rally and encouraged state legislators to oppose this special interest legislation and to stand on the side of the citizens who count on public access television and critical funding to local governments. The League President, Mayor Jim Boles of Winslow, was joined by mayors of cities and towns both large and small in calling for a stop to legislative intervention in locally negotiated agreements that are already regulated by

“Though the PEG community and local governments succeeded last year in conveying a message of broad public opposition to these bills, the cable industry has not capitulated and will likely pursue legislation again in the 2006 session.”

Mary Okoye

federal law. Representatives of the PEG community and public safety workers also attended in support of the public service provided by PEG channels.

More cities entered the fight to defeat the legislation, now amended to reflect President Bennett's offer and to allow cable companies to telecast their logos on PEG channels. The cities of Chandler and Peoria worked tirelessly to secure the "no" vote of a key Senator. The final version of the cable bill was defeated in the Senate by one vote!

But it was not over. Cable industry lobbyists sought to have yet another version reintroduced and heard in legislative committee. Randy Graf — a former legislator, majority whip and a proponent of public access television — made personal visits to the Speaker of the House and key committee members asking them to bury the legislation. The end of session was near. The legislature was weary from huge budget battles with the Governor, and time was on our side. In the end, no laws were passed to preempt local government's cable franchise and licensing authority.

Though the PEG community and local governments succeeded last year in conveying a message of broad public opposition to these bills, the cable industry has not capitulated and will likely pursue legislation again in the 2006 session [see sidebar]. In the face of this challenge, local governments, community media organizations, and the grassroots must persevere in determined, coordinated efforts to retain local control of rights-of-way, secure educational resources, and protect venues for expression.

ACM Watch List of State Legislatures

California, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia

At Press Time:

As predicted in this article, Cox came back this year with a full assault on the legislature and the Cities of Arizona. Strategically deploying vast resources with pin-point accuracy, their battalion of lobbyists were able to neutralize most members of the legislature and the Cities of Phoenix and Tucson. HB 2812 was passed and signed into law by the Governor on March 3, 2006. It will limit what cities can negotiate by restricting the definition of gross revenues and disallowing any in-kind contributions other than two basic and two digital PEG channels.

II. Activists Mobilize People Power

A WORLD OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVISM

“Giant media companies have failed us on all fronts. They have failed to provide access to all communities. They have stifled and squelched competition, eliminating choices in the marketplace. They have failed to bridge the digital divide, leaving America far behind other countries. They have failed to open their networks to local and independent content creators. They have failed to protect net freedoms that keep the internet an open road for all. We need real competition and a choice of innovative communications services. It’s time to turn back the new tide of media consolidation and oppose the merger of AT&T and BellSouth.”

*Timothy Karr
Campaign Director
Free Press*

ADVOCATES FOR PUBLIC ACCESS to cable television and consumer rights have been joined by a new generation of activists, inspired largely by the rise of the internet and fueled by inexpensive electronic tools able to mobilize human networks. These activists cover a broad range of media and communications issues — from low power radio and public broadcasting to copyright, privacy and community broadband. They have de-

veloped public policy positions that cross regulatory platforms and international borders.

These activists and organizations work “inside the beltway” and in local communities across the nation. Their policy platforms point the way to a true “level playing field” for public interest media and communications — free speech, open access, diverse voices and democratic communications.

ADVOCATE RESOURCES AND NETWORKS

CENTER FOR DIGITAL DEMOCRACY

Many of the organizations active in media and communications policy are referred to throughout the People’s Guide to the Telecommunications Act of 2006 and this companion Activist Resource Guide (PG II). The Center for Digital Democracy links to an extensive network of activists in media and communications policy.

www.democraticmedia.org/ddc/Reform-Resources/organizationlinks.html

MEDIA EMPOWERMENT ORGANIZING MANUAL

There are many things you can do to make a meaningful impact in your community and country. The Media Empowerment Organizing Manual, published by the United Church of Christ’s Office of Communication, offers information about some of the many media justice organizing, policy and education drives going on around the United States, and how you can take action in your part of the world.

www.ucc.org/ocinc/mep/orgman.htm

HEAR US NOW

Consumers Union’s HearUsNow.org provides tools and resources, ranging from guides to conducting public issues forums, consumer tips in English and Spanish, and links to a growing list of community and national groups working on media and telecommunications issues. Users

are directly connected to opportunities for direct action on issues of interest and relevancy to their communities, and organizations are given a platform through which to highlight their concerns and successes.

www.hearusnow.org

ELECTRONIC FRONTIER FOUNDATION

When our freedoms in the networked world come under attack, the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) is the “first line of defense.” EFF was founded in 1990 — well before the internet was on most people’s radar — and continues to confront cutting-edge issues defending free speech, privacy, innovation, and consumer rights. EFF champions the public interest in every critical battle affecting digital rights. EFF intervenes in key court cases and has a constituency of 50,000 supporters who can be mobilized for action.

www.eff.org

TELECOMMUNITY

TeleCommUnity is an alliance of municipal and county governments and their associations who work to “refocus attention” in Washington on local control and community needs as the basis for telecommunications policy.

www.telecommunityalliance.org

COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS OF AMERICA

Communications Workers of America is the “union for the information age.” Resources include position papers, organizing tools and useful research materials (e.g., Comcast Watch, www.comcast-watch.com).

www.cwa-union.org

CAMPAIGN LEGAL CENTER’S MEDIA POLICY PROGRAM

This program shapes political broadcasting policy by promoting awareness and enforcement of political broadcasting laws through FCC rulemaking proceedings, congressional action, and public education.

www.campaignlegalcenter.org

ACTIVIST TOOLS

Free Press offers links to resources and downloads for effective media reform activism.

www.freepress.net/action/tools

RESOURCES FOR THE MEDIA MOVEMENT

Activists, researchers, educators, organizers, public interest groups and other advocates for media and communications systems that serve democracy, social justice and human rights have a new way to connect and build strategy online.

Media Action Center is an online knowledge exchange center for advocates and educators concerned with media justice, media reform and communication rights. You can search, find and post:

- events for media activists and scholars
- available grants, awards and other opportunities
- research on media policy and advocacy strategies
- publications and book recommendations about media issues
- tools for organizers and organizations

MediaActionCenter.org

Center for International Media Action’s (CIMA) Visual Map of Media Policy Activism is a graphic look at public interest media organizations around the world. For the complete version, go to www.mediaactioncenter.org



PUBLIC INTEREST POLICY POSITIONS – USA

MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY CAMPAIGN: THE DEMOCRATIC DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS ACT

Building on two years of coalition building, twenty-three national and regional public interest media organizations recently completed a platform for U.S. communications policy. This proposal, presented in March 2005 to the Arca Foundation's Media and Democracy Program (www.arcafoundation.org), outlines the **Democratic Digital Communications Act** and details the strategies for moving forward on national legislation and grassroots organizing. Here is an excerpt from this landmark coalition work.

The Democratic Digital Communications Act would:

- Mandate that all distributors of mass media must offer open, nondiscriminatory access to all content providers to their distribution channels and to their video program guides and all other technology that informs viewers about available program content.
- Ensure that all media platforms are, or become, affordable to all citizens, particularly low-income families and minorities, so that those Americans left behind because of the digital divide have access to the information they need to fully participate in our democracy and our economy.

- Reverse the trend of mergers and consolidation by imposing national ownership caps on radio and television, and prohibit cross-ownership of newspapers and broadcast outlets in individual media markets.
- Evaluate proposed broadcast mergers, acquisitions and license renewal applications on a standard based on principles similar to the Community Reinvestment Act.
- Create incentives and opportunities for minority and community ownership of media outlets.

For more information on the campaign to pass the Democratic Digital Communications Act and the work of the major national and regional media reform organizations, contact Henry DeSio.

HDeSio@CommonCause.org

www.cctv.org/cmrdigitalact.htm

“We’ll never have a fair media system if a handful of companies is allowed to control all the ways we receive information. The consolidation of corporate ownership of our media has not only reduced diversity of viewpoints, it has also reduced racial, ethnic and gender diversity in media.”

*from Media Policy 101:
What you need to
know to change the
media system.
[www.freepress.net/
action/tools](http://www.freepress.net/action/tools)*

One-Sheet on Telecom

An example of a one-sheet from Media Democracy Chicago and Illinois PIRG about why cities should oppose the draft of the Telecom Reform Act and related video franchise bills in Congress.



Protect Local Control of Telecommunications:

Citizens' Right To Communicate At Risk

Current proposals before Congress and the FCC threaten cities' rights to negotiate franchise agreements with cable and telephone companies, replacing them with state or federal franchises.

Television, telephone and broadband internet services are all converging, and the old regulations no longer work. We need new policies that serve the public interest, not special interests.

Cities Could Lose:

- Right to negotiate franchises with cable companies and telephone companies
- General funding from cable companies
- Funding for public access cable channels
- Right to offer free or low-cost broadband internet

Citizens Could Lose:

- Economic development and technological innovation resulting from more competition
- Loss of local and state-level recourse for consumer complaints
- Access to telephone, internet and television services
- Choice of providers and services

Please Support These Principles In Telecom Legislation:

- Prohibit redlining (refusal to serve low-income and/or low-density areas)
- Protect municipalities' right to offer broadband service
- Protect states' rights to resolve consumer complaints
- Protect and expand PEG (public, education, and government) cable channels
- Hold all video providers to the same standards
- Network neutrality (non-discrimination against content, applications or devices)
- Protect funds to bridge the digital divide

Please Oppose These Bills:

- S 1504 Broadband Investment and Consumer Choice - S1349, Video Choice Act
- HR 3146 Video Choice Act
- House Commerce Committee – Draft of Telecom Reform Act

For more information, contact Karen Young, Media Democracy Chicago, 773-517-6433, or see: www.freepress.net ■ www.mediamodemacychicago.org ■ www.illinoispirg.org

Media
Democracy
CHICAGO

Illinois PIRG

SEVEN PUBLIC INTEREST PRINCIPLES

The **Telecommunications Policy Roundtable** was convened for the first time in 1993 as a “cross platform coalition for an era of convergence.” It featured activists who represented unionized workers, librarians, computer professionals, consumer activists, children’s activists, representatives of ethnic minority and disabled organizations, and a new generation of media reformers. The Roundtable offers seven principles for the ongoing regulation of the information infrastructure and believes the public must be fully involved in all stages of development:

- Universal Access
- Freedom to Communicate
- Vital Civic Sector
- Diverse and Competitive Marketplace
- Equitable Workplace
- Privacy
- Democratic Policy Making

www.cctv.org/cmrtelcomroundtable.htm

NATOA CORE VALUES

The **National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA)** represents the telecommunications needs and interests of local governments and those who advise local governments. NATOA promulgates nine core values:

- Competition and Access to Products and Services
- Economic Development
- Homeland Security and Emergency Communications
- Localism Achieved Through Diverse Media and Telecommunications Ownership and Content
- Municipal Authority to Provide Telecommunications
- Police Powers/Government Taxing Authority
- Preservation of Local Government
- Rights-of-Way Authority
- Universal Service

www.natoa.org

PRINCIPLES FOR SPECTRUM POLICY REFORM

New America offers four principles that should guide Congress and the FCC in reforming spectrum policy:

- The airwaves are a public asset owned in common by all Americans
- All commercial licensees should pay a market-based rent for use of spectrum
- Rigid “zoning” of the airwaves should be replaced by a more flexible, market driven allocation process
- Revenue from licensing spectrum should be reinvested in new public assets.

www.newamerica.net/Download_Docs/pdfs/Pub_File_610_1.pdf

THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS AND ITS ACTION FUND

The **Center for American Progress** is a nonpartisan research and educational institute dedicated to promoting a strong, just and free America that ensures opportunity for all; the **American Progress Action Fund** is its sister advocacy organization. The Action Fund transforms progressive ideas into policy through rapid response communications, legislative action, grassroots organizing and advocacy, and partnerships with other progressive leaders throughout the country and the world.

www.americanprogress.org (see issues/media)
www.americanprogressaction.org

REINVENTING MEDIA ACTIVISM

The **Convergence Center** released **REINVENTING MEDIA ACTIVISM: PUBLIC INTEREST ADVOCACY IN THE MAKING OF U.S. COMMUNICATION-INFORMATION POLICY, 1960-2002**, in July 2004. This pioneering research focuses on the role of citizens groups in shaping communication and information policy. The research was funded by the Ford Foundation’s Knowledge, Creativity and Freedom Program. The report, and the data on which it was based, can be downloaded.

dcc.syr.edu/ford/rma/reinventing.pdf

“The rise of the internet in the 1990s is associated with a major change in the composition of the advocacy population. The organizations formed in the 1990s and 2000s tend to be focused on rights-oriented advocacy related to digital technology, such as privacy rights, first amendment rights, and rights to fair use of intellectual property. There is also a growing recognition that how the communications infrastructure is regulated affects the preservation or protection of individual rights.”

from REINVENTING MEDIA ACTIVISM: PUBLIC INTEREST ADVOCACY IN THE MAKING OF U.S. COMMUNICATION-INFORMATION POLICY, 1960-2002.

Citizens' Media Rights.org – Bill of Media Rights

Preamble

FREE AND VIBRANT MEDIA, full of diverse and competing voices, is the lifeblood of America's democracy and culture, as well as an engine of growth for its economy.

Yet, in recent years, massive and unprecedented corporate consolidation has dangerously contracted the number of voices in our nation's media. While some argue we live in an age of unprecedented diversity in media, the reality is that the vast majority of America's news and entertainment is now commercially-produced, delivered, and controlled by a handful of giant media conglomerates seeking to minimize competition and maximize corporate profits rather than maximize competition and promote the public interest.

According to the Supreme Court, the First Amendment protects the American public's right to "an uninhibited marketplace of ideas in which truth will prevail" and "suitable access to social, political, esthetic, moral and other ideas and experiences." Moreover, it is "the right of the viewers and listeners, not the right of the broadcasters, which is paramount."

But too often, our nation's policymakers favor media conglomerates' commercial interests over the public's Constitutional rights, placing America's democracy, culture, and economy at risk. Instead, guided by the principles that follow, policymakers must ensure that the Constitutional rights of present and future generations to freely express themselves in the media, and to access the free expression of others, using the technologies of today and tomorrow, are always "paramount."

We ask you to join the broad coalition of consumer, public interest, media reform, organized labor and other groups representing millions of Americans in proposing the following Bill of Citizens' Media Rights.

Media That Provide "An Uninhibited Marketplace of Ideas"

The American public has a right to:

- Journalism that fully informs the public, is independent of the government and acts as its watchdog, and protects journalists who dissent from their employers.
- Newspapers, television and radio stations, cable and satellite systems, and broadcast and cable networks operated by multiple, diverse, and independent owners that compete vigorously and employ a diverse workforce.
- Radio and television programming produced by independent creators that is original, challenging, controversial, and diverse.
- Programming, stories, and speech produced by communities and citizens.
- internet service provided by multiple, independent providers who compete vigorously and offer access to the entire internet over a broadband connection, with freedom to attach within the home any legal device to the net connection and run any legal application.

- Public broadcasting insulated from political and commercial interests that is well-funded and especially serves communities underserved by privately-owned broadcasters.
- Regulatory policies emphasizing media education and citizen empowerment, not government censorship, as the best ways to avoid unwanted content.

Media That Use The Public's Airwaves To Serve The Public Interest

The American public has a right to:

- Electoral and civic, children's, educational, independently produced, local and community programming, as well as programming that serves Americans with disabilities and underserved communities.
- Media that reflect the presence and voices of people of color, women, labor, immigrants, Americans with disabilities, and other communities often underrepresented.
- Maximum access and opportunity to use the public airwaves and spectrum.
- Meaningful participation in government media policy, including disclosure of the ways broadcasters comply with their public interest obligations, ascertain their community's needs, and create programming to serve those needs.

Media That Reflect And Respond To Their Local Communities

The American public has a right to:

- Television and radio stations that are locally owned and operated, reflective of and responsible to the diverse communities they serve, and able to respond quickly to local emergencies.
- Well-funded local public access channels and community radio, including low-power FM radio stations.
- Universal, affordable internet access for news, education, and government information, so that all citizens can better participate in our democracy and culture.
- Frequent, rigorous license and franchise renewal processes for local broadcasters and cable operators that meaningfully include the public.

Conclusion

These principles are not meant to be all-inclusive. Rather, they illustrate an American media structure that is the American public's present and future right under the Constitution of the United States.

GLOBAL MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS REFORM

GLOBAL INFORMATION POLICY AND ACTIVISM

As multi-national communications conglomerates extend their influence around the globe, media policy has ceased to be a nation-specific issue. The next few years will be critical for the development of global communications policy. The Winter 2006 issue of *Community Media Review* will address global information policy and activism. It will be edited by Diana Agosta (dagosta@igc.org).

COMMUNICATIONS RIGHTS IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

Communications Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) is a campaign to ensure that communication rights are central to the information society and to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).
www.crisinfo.org

THE PEOPLE'S COMMUNICATION CHARTER

The **People's Communication Charter** provides the common framework for all those who share the belief that people should be active and critical participants in their social reality and should be able to communicate their ideas and opinions.
www.pccharter.net/charteren.html

AN AGENDA FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

After a long preparatory process, the first phase of the **World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)** took place in Geneva in December 2003. At this meeting, the "WSIS Action Plan" identified a wide range of issues that need to be addressed to build an open and inclusive information society.
www.wsis-online.net

Bill of Media Rights

The Bill of Media Rights (facing page) is a document put forth by organizations representing millions of Americans. The Bill presents a positive and unified vision for a competitive, diverse and independent media to better serve our nation's democracy and culture — today and tomorrow.
www.citizensmediarights.org

UNESCO COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SECTOR

UNESCO's **Communication and Information Sector (CI)** was established in its present form in 1990. Its programs are rooted in UNESCO's Constitution, which requires the organization to promote the "free flow of ideas by word and image."
portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=1657&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

PUBLIC CITIZEN'S GLOBAL TRADE WATCH

Global Trade Watch promotes democracy by challenging corporate globalization, arguing that the current globalization model is neither a random inevitability nor "free trade." At the same time that there is a genuine media reform movement in the United States (demonstrated by the immense public reaction to the FCC's proposed lifting of media ownership restrictions), media conglomerates are turning their attention to international trade forums where they face less public opposition to their efforts to define media and communications issues as entertainment rather than unique cultural assets that must be protected through public interest requirements forged on national levels through democratic processes.
www.citizen.org

FREE PRESS GLOBAL COMMUNICATION PROJECT

Learn how international institutions, such as the World Trade Organization, affect domestic media policy, and about activist efforts to reform them.
www.freepress.net/global

According to Archbishop John Foley, president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, one of the last official documents issued by Pope John Paul II was an Apostolic Letter "to those responsible for communications." Following are a couple of particularly telling passages from the Pope's letter.

"The mass media can and must promote justice and solidarity according to an organic and correct vision of human development by reporting events accurately and truthfully, analyzing situations and problems completely, and providing a forum for different opinions. An authentically ethical approach to using the powerful communication media must be situated within the context of a mature exercise of freedom and responsibility, founded upon the supreme criteria of truth and justice."

"I would like to recall our attention to the subject of media access, and of co-responsible participation in their administration. If the communications media are a good destined for all humanity, then ever-new means must be found — including recourse to opportune legislative measures — to make possible a true participation in their management by all. The culture of co-responsibility must be nurtured."

Read the full text of the letter.
www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20050124_il-rapido-sviluppo_en.html

III. Frame and Take Charge of the Debate

FRAME THE DEBATE

GEORGE LAKOFF, author of *DON'T THINK OF AN ELEPHANT: KNOW YOUR VALUES AND FRAME THE DEBATE*, talks about the importance of language in how we frame discussions and communicate the importance of media reform to the "public."

"Conservatives understand what unites them, and they understand how to talk about it, and they are constantly updating their research on how best to express their ideas."

George Lakoff
DON'T THINK OF AN ELEPHANT



How do we translate technical policy statements into salient, pithy, sticky and convincing messages that move people to action? Frame the issue in black and white. Tell the story. Use a variety of tools and formats (posters to poems, web alerts to op-eds, video blogs to face-to-face meetings). Activate your human networks (go viral). Use electronic tools. Be strategic. Get going!

The Information Superhighway: Paving Over the Public

Interview with Herb Schiller

Q: In a scenario where large blocks of information are owned by corporations, entire classes of people will be excluded. The emerging information superhighway will further alienate society insofar as it'll be a pay-only access.

A: Part of the Clinton administration's job in building the information superhighway involves auctioning off long-term leases to frequencies on the radio spectrum. This is a tremendous change. And it is happening almost without comment or debate. Now what does this mean? It means they're taking a portion of public property, the radio spectrum, justifiably considered a natural resource, just like a timber stand, or a waterfall.

Q: Like a national park?

A: Exactly. All of these things are public property, national resources. Radio was originally intended as a people's resource. And, as such, it has been very badly abused and mismanaged, there's no question about it. The people who have received licenses to broadcast have failed in their commitment to the public mandate. Radio broadcasters have screwed the public and used the radio spectrum for their own personal profit while they were under mandate to serve the public's interest.

Z Magazine, March 1994

www.vcn.bc.ca/bcla-ip/governments/schiller.html

Give the People What They Want: A Story

by Andy Goodman

EVEN IF YOU HAVE REAMS of evidence on your side, remember: numbers numb, jargon jars, and nobody ever marched on Washington because of a pie chart. If you want to connect with your audience, tell them a story.

There's a maxim in public speaking that holds true whether you're addressing five people or five hundred: in a two-hour speech, people will remember a 2-minute story. Ten thousand years of conditioning may have something to do with it. As a species, we evolved in a story-telling culture; that's how each clan preserved its most important lessons and ensured they would be passed on to succeeding generations. Even today, we read stories to our children beginning at very early ages, implicitly teaching them to look for the narrative structure that can bring order and meaning to a seemingly random jumble of events (otherwise known as "life").

Which makes me wonder about all the presenters and public speakers I see these days who don't tell stories. When they were children and bedtime rolled around, did their parents deliver a PowerPoint presentation with bulleted arguments against building a house out of twigs or straw? Or does the explanation lie deeper in the past — perhaps a fork in our species' evolutionary road that somehow separated the Storytellers from the Clan of the Bar Graph?

Don't get me wrong here: I'm not suggesting that everyone must become Garrison Keillor, Spaulding Gray, or whoever your favorite storyteller may be. Rather, I simply want to reinforce the importance of telling stories if your goal is to educate, persuade, or in any way connect with your audience. Just consider the following:

People are hardwired to respond to stories

While several millennia of conditioning are enough to explain our affinity for stories, there may be a biological component as well. In his book, *WISE UP: THE CHALLENGE OF LIFELONG LEARNING*, Guy Claxton reports that a team of neuroscientists

believe they have identified a nodule in the brain whose sole purpose is "to look at [our] thoughts, experiences, and behaviors and make sense of them in terms of the ongoing narrative of [our own] life." In other words, stories may have both nature and nurture on their side.

Individual stories are more convincing than sets of data

University of Michigan psychology professor Richard Nisbett has conducted clinical tests to verify this point. In one such test, he introduced a group of people to a prison guard and then presented the group with hard data describing what most prison guards are like. In every test, the data presented a contradictory image to the one projected by the guard (e.g., if Nisbett brought in a mean and surly guard, the data would show that most guards are friendly). In test after test, the group ignored the hard data: If the guard was mean, the group concluded most guards were mean; if he was nice, they believed most guards were nice — the individual "story" always trumped the "facts."

Stories bring the invisible and abstract to life

Overflowing landfills are situated safely out of sight — and were, consequently, out of mind — but they landed on front pages in the 1980s when a lonely garbage barge named Mobro couldn't find a place to dump its load. As it sailed from one unfriendly port to another down the East Coast, USA Today, and other news outlets, tracked its progress, simultaneously telling a story that ultimately helped make recycling a household word. More recently, both presidential candidates trotted out an assortment of simple, real-world stories to illustrate complex positions on education, Medicare, and social security. Even when the stories weren't entirely true (as with that poor girl who supposedly had to stand in class), they still spread quickly and helped frame the debate.

Story Telling

Andy Goodman is a communications consultant and trainer who helps nonprofits reach more people more effectively. Based in Los Angeles, Andy consults with nonprofits (www.agoodmanonline.com), produces invaluable studies (such as, *WHY BAD ADS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE*, and out in early 2006, *WHY BAD MEETINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE*) and publishes an invaluable monthly newsletter, *free range thinking*™, which profiles best practices, success stories and resources in the field of public interest communications.

Media Democracy Day poster (facing page), produced by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, based in Vancouver, Canada.

The Story of Akaku: A Fable?

by Anonymous

THERE WAS ONCE a thriving, happy baby. She was about seven years old. Her name was PEG. She lived among hundreds of tall, noisy buildings in a small patch of green that was open, free and full of light. People who loved her called her by her Hawaiian name, Akaku, which means Vision, as if looking in a mirror. That is how people thought of her.

Whenever anyone spoke to her, she would listen. She would not censor or judge. Then she would faithfully repeat what they had said exactly as they had said it to everyone that stopped by. She would not change one word or alter what she had heard to satisfy herself or anyone else. She was very akamai, very advanced. People even knew of her in distant lands. She was renowned and beloved. She was always true to her word even if some people didn't like it.

One day, a rich man came and saw her tiny, little green space. He saw the people gathered around talking to Akaku, telling her story after story. All kind people. People of every stripe and character, people from education, people from government. He saw teachers and students, young and old, aunties and uncles, hula dancers and daredevils. He saw archbishops, atheists, artists and freaks, rich and poor, good and bad, all talking at once. Some could not express themselves very well at all. Some had speech impediments. A few even used bad words. And much to the rich man's chagrin, he saw Akaku listening. She never corrected anyone, never asked them to change or rephrase what they had to say. She simply smiled and repeated exactly what everyone said, over and over again for all to hear.

"This is not proper," thought the rich man. "I don't agree! What if some of this rabble says something bad about me! Not only that," he fumed, "this tiny patch of green that she lives on has weeds, dandelions, crabgrass and too many seeds! Why, this little baby, Akaku, steals valuable real estate from me and from you. The only way to stop her ranting and raving is to

give her little home here a real good paving. This place is nothing but a magnet for fools, we need a government building here, and state run schools. I am going to personally see to it that this little baby gets chopped into three. One for you and two for me."

The rich man then went to the Schoolmaster, who he knew from the club and said, "Let's put a stop once and for all to all this hubbub. This baby, PEG, breaks all of our rules. Let's rip her in three and I'll build you more schools."

His edifice complex now fully awake, the Schoolmaster agreed to get in on the take. "A capital idea," the Schoolmaster said, "let's go to the legislature and make sure she is dead."

They both got a lawyer with a slithery pen, and met in back rooms with a bunch of bad men. They wrote up a law to cut the baby in thirds and get most of her money by twisting her words. "If we get her allowance she can no longer eat. You take her head and I'll take her feet. It will be easy," said the Senator to the man in the House, "that Board that looks over her will go quiet as a mouse."

With a paper in front of them and a gun to their head, there were some on the Board who climbed into bed with the rich man and Schoolmaster and this is what they said: "In deference to power and influence and suits, I can no longer remember our purpose or roots. If free speech must be curtailed in the interest of prudence, why not just say that we're helping teachers and students?"

Akaku still listens while the bigwigs decide, to those who speak truth and to those who have lied. And she wonders what will happen if soon comes the day, when she is no longer around to repeat what you say.

Public Access in
Hawaii

Sadly, the story of Akaku
continues to unfold in
Hawaii. Learn more at
www.akaku.org

Key Elements of
Compelling Storytelling

Context
Simplicity
Interest
Trust
Meaning
Connectedness
Magic
Relevance
Immediacy

from BEYOND THE BRAND
John Winsor

Whose Web is it, Anyway?

by Juan Gonzalez

RIGHT NOW, as you read these words, the telecommunications lobbyists are scurrying around the halls of Congress and every state capitol in the land, scheming to pull off yet another huge rip-off under the banner of freedom and competition. This time they want to steal the internet itself. They want to grab the most important communications tool of our age right out from under the American people. Or at least they want to privatize access to it and charge the highest possible toll for anyone to get on the highway's on-ramps.

Now the big phone and cable companies, the same ones that already control the communications pipelines into our

homes, want to create new classes and tiers of service on the internet.

Platinum service for the richest customers to download video and data. Cheaper gold and bronze service for the middle and working class. And when it comes to poor neighborhoods, some companies are already practicing digital redlining and not even providing broadband service.

New York Daily News (excerpt)
February 9, 2006
www.nydailynews.com

“For an idea to pass from one person to another, it must be contained in something that can be easily transmitted, just as a disease will spread within a human population via a highly contagious virus.”

Andy Goodman

Poem

A LIVING ROOM AMENDMENT

If you've never watched Access TV,
Let me tell you what you would see,
Preachers, rabbis, Buddhists, too,
Islamic scholars to name a few.
Sound familiar? I thought it might,
Amendment One of the Bill of Rights.

Access channel's a treat for the eyes,
Cause every show's a big surprise.
Listen to folks talk about stuff
That makes you shout, "Enough's Enough!"
Free to listen, or sit and scoff.
Free to speak, or turn it off.
Sound familiar? I thought it might,
Amendment One of the Bill of Rights.

You may hear news with an obvious lean,
Right or left or in between,
But nobody tells you what to report,
Or what to write or what to retort.
The Access press is American free.
That's the way they meant it to be.
Sound familiar? I thought it might,
Amendment One of the Bill of Rights.

And council meetings where people drone
About issues special to you alone.
Folks in a group, voting their hearts,
Americans together, not Americans apart.
Freely assembled at home on our screens
But what am I saying, you know what I mean.
Sound familiar? I thought it might,
Amendment One of the Bill of Rights.

Petitions proposed, petitions signed,
Americans writing on dotted lines,
And Americans gathering those precious names,
For causes just and causes inane.
But Access shows it; you decide,
To sit and snicker or go for the ride.
Sound familiar? I thought it might,
Amendment One of the Bill of Rights.

Access television is America free
A voice of the people, so please let it be.
It's your decision, your notable choice,
But there's no free speech, if there is no voice.
Save ACCESS TELEVISION!

by John C. Cronin,
Access Sacramento
board member

Filed with the FCC,
2/13/06 in response to
NPRM 05-311 on
Video Franchises and Competition.

John can be reached at
thereforiam@comcast.net

“Word of mouth is — even in this age of mass communications and multi-million dollar advertising campaigns — still the most important form of human communication.”

*Malcolm Gladwell
THE TIPPING POINT*

WIKIPEDIA defines viral marketing and viral advertising as marketing techniques that seek to exploit pre-existing social networks to produce exponential increases in brand awareness through viral processes similar to the spread of an epidemic. It is word-of-mouth, delivered and enhanced online; it harnesses the network effect of the internet and can be very useful in reaching a large number of people rapidly.

Often the ultimate goal of viral marketing campaigns is to generate media coverage via “offbeat” stories worth many times more than the campaigning company’s advertising budget.

Viral advertising refers to the idea that people will pass on and share interesting and entertaining content; this is often sponsored by a brand, which is looking to build awareness of a product or service. These viral commercials often take the form of funny video clips, or interactive Flash games, images, and even text.

First popularized in Malcolm Gladwell’s 2000 book, *THE TIPPING POINT*, and buttressed by several Seth Godin offerings, “going viral” is about an idea taking off under its own power, with people spreading it as they would the flu. The concept is simple, but in practice, like the flu, launching a successful “viral campaign” is easier said than done.

WORD OF MOUTH 101

All word of mouth marketing techniques are based on the concepts of customer satisfaction, two-way dialogue, and transparent communications. The basic elements are:

- Educating people about your products and services
- Identifying people most likely to share their opinions
- Providing tools that make it easier to share information
- Studying how, where, and when opinions are being shared
- Listening and responding to supporters, detractors, and neutrals

www.womma.org

VIRAL FLASH ACTIVISM

Viral Flash activism is one of the new tools in the activists tool kit. Flash Activism movies take web activism to the next level. Free Range Graphics (www.freerangegraphics.com), best known for *The Meatrix*, is a prime example of a 1-2 minute animation that encapsulates an organization’s message or call to action, and seeks to inspire, amuse and activate target audiences.

The Best Flash Animation Site (www.bestflashanimationsite.com) is a resource for flash developers and designers that features some of the best examples of “cause marketing” on the internet.

Case Study: Amnesty International USA

THE 1996 PEACE ACCORDS, which officially ended Guatemala’s three-decade-long conflict, called for the abolition of the country’s notorious Military Intelligence Unit, known as the EMP (Estado Mayor Presidencial) as an integral component of demilitarization. Seven years later, with little progress made toward that important goal, Amnesty International USA decided to put international pressure on the Guatemalan administration and Congress to abolish the EMP.

Amnesty launched an online campaign, highlighted by a flash movie, explaining the EMP (with both Spanish and English

versions). Within weeks, hundreds of thousands of people had watched the flash movie, and almost 75,000 people sent letters to the Guatemalan President urging the abolition of the EMP. The flash movie was reported prominently in the major Guatemalan newspapers and CNN Español, as well as promoted through online viral marketing.

In part because of this public attention, on September 25, 2003, the Guatemalan government passed a law abolishing the Estado Mayor Presidencial.

For more case studies see Carol/Trev-elyan Strategy Group at www.ctsg.com

TEN PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS

IN 1985, Herb Chao Gunther created a code of conduct for progressive activists. Fifteen years later, the guiding force behind Public Media Center (www.publiamediacycenter.org) revisits his original "Ten Principles," and he still likes what he sees:

1. Communicate values.
2. American political discourse is fundamentally oppositional.
3. The undecided in the middle determine the outcome of a given fight.
4. Americans want to be on the winning side.
5. Make enemies, not friends. Identify the opposition and attack their motives.
6. American mass culture is fundamentally alienating and disempowering.
7. Target a few key audiences and strategize for social diffusion through opinion leaders, not by reaching the mass audience.
8. Responsible extremism sets the agenda.
9. Social consensus isn't permanent and must continually be asserted and defended.
10. Strategic diversity is essential to the success of social movements.

from *free-range thinking*, October 2000
www.agoodmanonline.com/newsletter/archive/2000_10.htm

CARTOON GUIDE TO SPECTRUM POLICY

Below is a graphic depiction of the issues related to public ownership of the airwaves, produced by the New America Foundation – Spectrum Policy Program in 2002. The spectrumpolicy.org site includes policy white papers and other information packaged for a wider audience. Don't miss the Citizen's Guide to the Airwaves. www.newamerica.net/index.cfm?pg=article&DocID=1555

What if the only allowed speaker was a loud speaker?



4



5

BOILING DOWN THE MESSAGE OF MEDIA REFORM

The End of the Internet

by Jeff Chester

“How do you think Google, Vonage and others are going to get to customers? Through a broadband pipe. Cable companies have them. We have them. Now what they would like to do is use my pipes free, but I ain’t going to let them do that because we have spent this capital and we have to have a return on it. So there’s going to have to be some mechanism for these people who use these pipes to pay for the portion they’re using. Why should they be allowed to use my pipes? The internet can’t be free in that sense, because we and the cable companies have made an investment and for a Google or Yahoo! or Vonage or anybody to expect to use these pipes [for] free is nuts!”

Edward Whitacre
SBC CEO

... **B**UT NOW, the phone companies are lobbying Washington to kill off what’s left of “common carrier” policy. They wish to operate their internet services as fully “private” networks. Phone and cable companies claim that the government shouldn’t play a role in broadband regulation: Instead of the free and open network that offers equal access to all, they want to reduce the internet to a series of business decisions between consumers and providers.

Besides their business interests, telephone and cable companies also have a larger political agenda. Both industries oppose giving local communities the right to create their own local internet wireless, or wi-fi, networks.

NET FREEDOM NOW!

Free Press is particularly effective at framing media reform campaigns, boiling down the key messages and providing immediate ways for both activists and members of the public to respond. Their **Net Freedom Now!** campaign calls us: “Don’t let big media crush the internet revolution.” All media reformers can learn from Free Press’ example.

www.freepress.net/netfreedom

A HELPING HAND FOR PLACING OP-EDS

Op-eds, those essays which appear in most newspapers opposite the editorial page, can play a valuable role in media campaigns, but it’s often easier to write a convincing op-ed than to convince a paper to run it. That’s where **Minuteman Media** can be an invaluable ally. From its headquarters in Norwalk, Connecticut, Minuteman Media places op-eds in rural and suburban newspapers across the country — over 750 newspapers with a collective readership in excess of 11 million. Most advocacy groups tend to focus their placement efforts on major urban newspapers, such as The New York Times

They also want to eliminate the last vestige of local oversight from electronic media — the ability of city or county government, for example, to require telecommunications companies to serve the public interest with, for example, public-access TV channels. The Bells also want to further reduce the ability of the FCC to oversee communications policy. They hope that both the FCC and Congress — via a new Communications Act — will back these proposals.”

The Nation (online)

www.thenation.com/doc/20060213/chester

or Washington Post, and the competition for spots in these publications is fierce. Smaller regional newspapers (with circulations of 100,000 or less) can often reach the same audience, and they may provide a much-needed forum when you’re shut out by big city papers. Minuteman Media distributes 4 op-eds each week and averages 375 placements, which explains why groups including Children’s Defense Fund, People for the American Way, and the Union of Concerned Scientists are regular contributors. And here’s the best news of all: the service is free.

www.minutemanmedia.org

Press Release: Snow Predicted

Alliance for Community Media call for national action

ON NOVEMBER 7TH, 2005, A SNOWSTORM! will blanket the entire United States — from Florida to Alaska, from Hawai'i to Maine — as Public, Educational and Governmental (PEG) channels on cable systems simultaneously show one minute of video snow. Snowstorm! is an action to organize grassroots support among PEG producers and viewers.

This Snowstorm! will remind communities what could be lost if new cable legislation before Congress is not fixed to protect the wonderful community channels we have all come to know and love. Say goodbye to televised:

- Political debate between local candidates;
- High School football games, annual pageants and chorales;
- City Council or Commission meetings;
- Weekly coverage of the Church next door, the Synagogue up the street or the Ashram, Mosque, Temple or Friends meeting around the corner;
- Cultural programs in Spanish, Hmong, Farsi, Cantonese, Magyar, Italian, Russian, Criolo, Portuguese and many other languages;
- Comedy shows by the neighborhood teenagers;
- Fire safety programs by your Volunteer Fire Department;
- The discussion of local, early screening resources by cancer survivors;
- Distance learning programs for housebound students.

It is not a coincidence that the Snowstorm! will hit nation-wide on the eve of state and local elections. We believe that the future of our democracy is dependent upon the availability of Public Greenspace in our communications system. We believe that there is no democracy without a place for community dialogue. We believe that the local Public, Educational and Government channels are that space.

This nationwide Snowstorm! will occur on November 7th at:

- 9 pm Eastern
- 8 pm Central
- 7 pm Mountain
- 6 pm Pacific
- 5 pm Alaska Standard Time
- 4 pm Hawaii Standard Time

In solidarity, community channels in parts of Europe will also be covered with snow at times to be announced.

“This nation has come to a critical juncture in the legislative battle to protect local franchising — especially Public, Educational, Government and Institutional Network resources for our communities,” warns Anthony Riddle, Executive Director of the Alliance for Community Media.

“These bills, as written, give a few powerful corporations complete control over the information passing into and out of every home in America,” Riddle continued. “No people can be free who do not have freedom to share any information they feel they need to make decisions. The greenspace provided by Public, Educational and Governmental access channels, is a real protection against corporate domination of our communities. Corporations should have the freedom to compete and innovate. Do our children deserve less? We believe in profits, but not at the expense of our democracy.”

The ACM asks that residents of every community hit by the Snowstorm! call and/or write their Senators and Representatives today. The message from the public is simple:

- My community believes in preserving open and free public spaces, such as PEG;
- The companies making billions of dollars in our communities should contribute financial support for these spaces;
- We want the Alliance for Community Media to speak for us in hearings and conversations about the new video laws.

Those wishing to play in the Snowstorm! will be asked to visit www.alliancecm.org or www.savemyfreespeech.net to find sample letters and electronic tools for mass emailing of Congressional representatives. Available press contacts at some participating PEG stations include (Your Name Here).

Release date: 10/31/2005
www.alliancecm.org/news.php?news_id=53

IV. Electronic Tools for Human Networks

“You can spend years looking at the Dean campaign and try to figure out how and why his campaign had “magic,” or you can read through Department of Defense literature on network-centric systems and realize that political campaigns and advocacy movements are just coming up to speed on things they have developed over the last 20 years. These campaigns are repeatable and based on sound operational theory.”

Marty Kearns

www.network-centricadvocacy.net

Marty Kearns is founder of Green Media Toolshed www.greenmediatoolshed.org

THE POWER OF MEDIA and communications activists to influence public policy lies in the human networks we are able to mobilize. Today’s activist “tool kit” combines old-fashioned grassroots organizing with a new generation of electronic tools. From flash mobs to podcasting, organizers are using the media tools described here as part of broader strategies for social change.

Getting the Message Out

by Kathy Mitchell

WHAT DOES IT TAKE to communicate a real strategy for real success? I’m going to make this sound easier than it really is. First, believe in your ability to succeed. Second, analyze yourself, analyze your opponent, and analyze the terrain between you. Take out a calendar and actually lay out key dates that affect your campaign (legislative session dates, major holidays, election dates, corporate board meeting dates, study committee meeting dates, filing deadlines for ballot initiatives). Add to this calendar the timing for online communications from your e-activists that might influence different targets and move your campaign forward. Then add to it things that offline volunteers can do, things other organizations

Special thanks are due to NTEN (www.nten.org) since many of these “best practices” are featured at their annual NTC conferences. Another “must have” resource is Compumentor’s Tech Soup (www.techsoup.org), a site dedicated to providing educational resources and distributing technology product donations to nonprofit organizations.

can do (your allies) and things your opponents are likely to do. Identify the best moments for offense, and the likely moments for defense. Finally look at your internal capacity and start to pare down the things you want to do to a core calendar of things you can actually pull off. Now, you have a strategy to communicate to your list.

If each volunteer activity (whether a simple email action or a complex field endeavor) actually helps put pressure on a decision maker, brings in a needed new ally, or splits off a problematic opponent, then your volunteers and e-activists will gladly dive in and do what it takes. You will see the results immediately.

gettingthemessageout.blogspot.com

COMMUNITY TOOL BOX

Community Tool Box provides over 6000 pages of practical information on community assessment, planning, mobilization, intervention, advocacy, evaluation and marketing.
ctb.ku.edu

COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

Community Mobilization is a clearing house for ideas on how new technology can mobilize communities.
como.typepad.com/community_mobilization

THE eNONPROFIT BENCHMARKS STUDY

The eNonprofit Benchmarks Study is the first study of its kind to look at the effectiveness of major American nonprofit organizations using the internet to raise money and influence public policy. The study is a tool that nonprofits can use to measure and compare their online performance to other organizations’ online programs.

www.e-benchmarksstudy.com

REWIRING THE FUTURE

RE-WIRING THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING: CIVICSPACE

CivicSpace is an open-source Content Management System (CMS) developed specifically for the needs of advocacy groups. As its name implies, it manages an organization's website; it also integrates tools such as mass email capability, on-line newsletters, discussion boards, polls, and blogs. CivicSpace is based on Drupal, and is designed to enable an organization to create and maintain its online presence. Nevertheless, some programming and database knowledge is required.

www.digitaldivide.net/articles/view.php?ArticleID=113 and civicspacelabs.org

MOVEON.ORG VICTORIES

MoveOn builds electronic advocacy groups that help busy, but concerned, citizens find their political voice. Examples of such groups include campaign finance, environmental and energy, media consolidation, and the Iraq war. Once a group is assembled, MoveOn provides information and tools to help each individual have the greatest possible impact.

www.moveon.org/victories.html

WEBTOOLS FOR ACTIVISTS: HOW TO PULL IT OFF EVEN IF YOU ARE NOT MOVEON

For activist organizations, communications and marketing strongly overlap with program delivery. There have been a slew of innovative tools used by big organizations such as MoveOn. Learn more about how these tools can be used to assist activist groups with smaller budgets and limited resources.

www.nten.org/ntc-2005-webtools

GUERRILLA MEDIA TOOLBOX

Cause Communications is a progressive public relations consulting group that works with nonprofits and causes and provides helpful free resources at its site. See links for resources, free guides and the Guerilla Toolbox.

www.causecommunications.com

LOUD AND CLEAR IN AN ELECTION YEAR: AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS

LOUD AND CLEAR IN AN ELECTION YEAR is a book available exclusively from the SPIN Project. Orders can be placed on their website. While you're visiting SPIN's site, you might also take a look at their other books: SPIN WORKS! A MEDIA GUIDE FOR COMMUNICATING VALUES AND SHAPING OPINION and BREAKING THROUGH TO GREAT: SMART STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING WINNING COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGNS.

www.spinproject.org

GET HEARD: THE MEDIA ACCESS TOOLKIT

MediaChannel is a media issues supersite, featuring criticism, breaking news, and investigative reporting from hundreds of organizations worldwide. Of particular interest for media reformers: GET HEARD: THE MEDIA ACCESS TOOLKIT.

www.mediachannel.org/news

ONLINE SURVEYS: HOW TO TAP INTO YOUR COMMUNITY'S PSYCHE

Online surveys are some of the most powerful and cost-effective marketing tools available to nonprofit organizations (NPOs). They can be the eyes and ears of your organization, instantly tuning you in to what your community is thinking, feeling and doing, and helping you make important decisions. NPOs are using surveys to strengthen such areas as programming, fundraising, advocacy, membership, marketing and communication.

www.nten.org/ntc-2005-onlinesurveys; see also www.surveymonkey.com

REMEMBERING FLASH MOBS

Who'd have thought a single email designed to mock New York scenesters would have turned into an international craze? The Park Slope-based founder of flash mobs talks to Stay Free! about how it all happened.

www.stayfreemagazine.org/archives/24/flash-mobs-history.html

Planning Your Online Presence

Here are some quick & dirty questions to ask *before* launching something online:

- 1) Who is this online tool/website for? And what are the marketable/unique things about this tool that set it apart from others?
- 2) What outcomes will indicate "success?"
- 3) How can I market to this audience? What traditional and non-traditional communication channels/marketing strategies can I employ to engage this key audience directly and indirectly?
- 4) What strategies can I develop to compel repeat visitors?
- 5) Who can I enlist to provide pro bono support if a budget is minimal (search engine optimization, banner ads, bloggers, etc.)?
- 6) What internal communications, training and/or education needs to happen among leadership to fully embrace this effort?

There are more important questions to ask but these are just a few key things to consider.

therhetoricofme.blogs.com/the_rhetoric_of_me/2006/02/the_all_importa.html

DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

Democracy in Action provides a suite of online organizing tools to help organizations develop advocacy campaigns, accept online donations, and more.
www.democracyinaction.org

ADVOCACY DEVELOPERS WIKI

A contributor-created website (wiki) for organizing advocacy campaigns.
wiki.advocacydev.org/cgi-bin/wiki.pl?AdvocacyTechnologies

Cool Tools

Cool Tools is a section of the Digital Divide Network dedicated to comparing notes on the best tools available.

www.digitaldivide.net/community/cooltools

Other resources for digital tools include:

Can you recommend an online advocacy service?

Discussion thread covering options for online advocacy tools.

www.techsoup.org/fb/index.cfm?fuseaction=forums.showSingleTopic&forum=2024&id=57334&cid=117

Listible

Offering a list of Web 2.0 products and services.
www.listible.com/list/complete-list-of-web-2-0-products-and-services

Web 2.0

Learn what Web 2.0 is and how it relates to your organization.
www.oreillynet.com/pub/a/oreilly/tim/news/2005/09/30/what-is-web-20.html

GET ON THE DIGITAL BICYCLE:

IT'S TIME TO MOBILIZE, MOBILIZE, MOBILIZE!

Our communities now have means for organizing that far outstrip what has previously been available. In addition to internet mobilizing, **Lowell Telecommunications Corporation** is developing a distribution network that uses a simple desktop application to subscribe to video content of near DVD quality.

www.cctv.org/cmrbicycling.htm and digitalbicycle.org

STREAMING MEDIA BIBLE

Techniques for creating world-class streaming media presentations, including creation, encoding, authoring, and serving streaming media.

www.nten.org/ntc-2005-streaming

RSS FOR NONPROFITS

Real Simple Syndication (RSS) is a simple way to deliver frequently changing web content. Syndication makes it easier for your group to find, share, and contribute to information on the web.

www.techsoup.org/howto/articles/internet/page1643.cfm?show=list&sort=first?cg=searchterms&sg=rss

BLOGGING

With rising popularity and usage, a web log, or blog, can be an effective tool for nonprofit organizations to reach target audiences in a new way, or research alternative takes on the day's news or spot trends. A blog is an online journal hosted as part of an existing website or as its own site.

www.techsoup.org/howto/yourstories/webbuilding/page1510.cfm?cg=searchterms&sg=blog

PODCASTING: A NEW VOICE ON THE NET

If you've ever wanted to speak directly to your audience, here's your chance. While blogs give anyone with something to say a means to publish their views on the web, podcasting gives those with a computer and internet access a chance to create and post their own radio broadcasts.

www.techsoup.org/howto/articles/software/page2098.cfm?cg=searchterms&sg=podcast

FREEVLOG

A vlog is a video blog. **Freevlog** offers a tutorial to help you get started vlogging.
freevlog.org

VLOGGING

"I've spent my holiday vacation playing with vlogs to learn what this can do for work (I imagine high-school kids giving sports reports) and for pleasure (that is, this blog). The lessons come here and there and so, as vacation ends, I'm pulling together the lessons and links in this post."

www.buzzmachine.com/archives/200212.html

INTERNET ARCHIVE

The **Internet Archive** is building a digital library of internet sites and other cultural artifacts in digital form. Like a paper library, it provides free access to researchers, historians, scholars, and the general public.

www.archive.org

FLICKR.COM

An archive of millions of public domain images sorted by key words.

www.flickr.com

MOVING MESSAGES THROUGH MEDIA

Strategic Tool: mediapolicyblog.org

Millions of people in America have turned off their TVs, tuned out ABC, NBC, and PBS and are getting all their information and video from alternative on-line sources such as interactive blogs, video blogs and web-based newspapers. The **Center for Media & Democracy** (Burlington, VT) and **Cambridge Community Television** (Cambridge, MA) recently jumped into the blogosphere fray with their non-partisan media reform video blog, **Mediapolicyblog.org**.

Created as a direct response to current legislation sitting in the House and Senate that threaten public access funding and bandwidth set-aside, the video blog facilitates the exchange of advocacy materials, opens up dialogue between community media centers, and increases the capacity of media centers to educate their

communities on the threats to public interest media.

Mediapolicyblog.org is an opportunity for the media reform community to harness the power of digital distribution in this time of regulatory and technological change. Community media centers and media reform organizations from all over the world are invited to comment on the posts, suggest links, spark debate, and download video for use on their websites.

Download content from Mediapolicyblog.org for use in the fight to save public access television. Please contact Jason Crow (Jason@cctvcambridge.org) for more information.

mediapolicy.blogspot.com

Video for a Change

Public forums are an important way to raise awareness about key policy issues. Local and regional versions of "town hall" events, or even simple interviews, can be effective if they are well-organized, well-publicized and televised. These programs should also be recorded, and, along with shorter PSAs, made available for viewing in other communities via The Digital Bicycle, podcasting, or streaming.

In addition to MediaPolicy-Blog, be sure to check out these sources:

Princeton Server Group

The latest advocacy programming of interest to the PEG community.
psg2.princeton.edu/acm

Keep It Local campaign

Short program highlighting PEG responses to Congressional action.
www.ci.madison.wi.us/mcc12/telco.html

Save Public Access TV! PSAs

Manhattan Neighborhood network produced two 30-second PSAs that summarize the threats to and benefits of PEG access.
www.mnn.org/saveaccess

Educational Forum on National Franchise Legislation

Portland Community Media produced a 60-minute public forum on the impact of national legislation. Available for broadcast at psg2.princeton.edu/acm

CALLING ALL ACTIVISTS

DITCH YOUR TELEPHONE FOR VOIP

Organizations most likely to benefit from VoIP are those that need to make lots of long-distance phone calls, particularly abroad. This includes organizations that work internationally, but could also apply to those with staff in other parts of the country or abroad. Small nonprofits and NGOs that already have computers and an internet connection, or whose staff work remotely because there is no office, could also benefit, even if they are just making local calls.

www.techsoup.org/howto/articles/inter-net/page4248.cfm?cg=searchterms&sg=skype

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www.techsoup.org/howto/articles/inter-net/page2171.cfm

BUILDING YOUR OWN CONFERENCE BRIDGE

Conference calling is a poorly implemented feature on most telephone systems. (Do you even know how to set up a conference call on your PBX? If not, join the club.) "Meet Me" conferencing systems and services make this much easier to do.

www.oreillynet.com/pub/wlg/6945

CELL PHONES FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Cell phones are an emerging tool that cross traditional socio-economic and cultural boundaries for organizing, campaigns and civic engagement. There are numerous examples from all over the world of cell phone campaigns that have swung elections through innovative get-out-the-vote activities, have been used to ensure impartial elections through monitoring, have resulted in massive collective action to free political prisoners, and have been used in public health strategies.

www.mobileactive.org

The Last Word

FRESH FROM ITS 2005 merger with SBC, AT&T announced on March 5, 2006 that it will acquire fellow telecommunications giant BellSouth for \$67 billion and, according to the Wall Street Journal, cut around 10,000 jobs while gaining BellSouth's 14 million customers. This merger is one of the most important telecom mergers since Judge Greene broke up AT&T in 1982. The U.S. Justice Department and FCC are expected to approve this deal in order to help the company in its race to become the leading video/phone/internet service provider in the country and, according to the WSJ, "effectively validate the vision of competition laid out by the government — one in which traditional telecom firms compete directly against cable operators rather than against each

other." It is worth noting that there is only one other major telecom firm left standing — created by the recent merger of Verizon and MCI.

Members of Alliance for Community Media now must prepare themselves to negotiate for public, educational and government access channels and funding with cable and telecom companies. At the same time, we must work to protect local franchising authority to manage the public rights-of-way upon which cable and telecom poles and wires are attached. The ground under public access is shifting but our policy principles remain the same. You will find that the ACM's **Public Policy Platform** guides the work we do to protect public access and free speech in Washington and in hundreds of local communities across the United States.

Alliance for Community Media Public Policy Platform

FOR DEMOCRACY TO FLOURISH, people must be active participants in their government, educated to think critically and free to express themselves. Communications networks which use the public rights-of-way and public spectrum must provide the means and support for that participation through community uses of media.

The Alliance for Community Media advances democratic ideals through public, educational and governmental access ("PEG") centers around the country that provide people with tools, training and transmission of their programming on cable channels. PEG access exists because of the regulatory framework for cable television that has been in place for more than 20 years. The PEG model can be strengthened and applied to new technological realities, assuring that localism and community participation are not displaced by commercial interests.

What's at Stake?

A handful of companies control most of what Americans read and see in media today.

As entertainment, sports and commerce flourish on media, other societal needs such as public education, health care, job training, civic participation and economic development are too often ignored.

New technologies and applications that evolve without a regulatory framework that supports public participation, threaten to eliminate the capacity and resources for PEG access equipment, facilities, training and services currently provided to localities by cable companies.

No clear public interest requirements have been attached to the giveaway of digital spectrum to broadcasters despite the fact that today, less than one-half of one percent of programming on broadcast television is local public affairs.

The regulatory framework for PEG is inadequate and under attack by commercial interests, resulting in survival struggles around the nation for this vital local communications resource.

What Federal Legislation is Needed?

Congress must establish a policy of "community reinvestment" through PEG that includes funds and bandwidth and/or spectrum that will be used for public purposes by:

- Dedicating for PEG access ten percent of the public airwaves and capacity on communication facilities that occupy public rights-of-way for free speech, diverse points of view, local programs, community-based education and political speech.
- Mandating funding of five percent of gross revenues from all infrastructure and service providers and spectrum licensees to support PEG equipment, facilities, training and services.
- Making PEG access universally available to any consumer of advanced telecommunications services (any service capable of full-motion video).

Upcoming CMR Issues

If you have ideas or would like to contribute to these issues, please contact the Guest Editor(s):



On Beyond Access

Mike Kroes (mak@fxntoonz.com) & Kari Peterson (kapeters@dcn.org)

Alliance for Community Media 30th Anniversary Conference Issue

Tim Goodwin (Goodwin@usxchange.net)

World Information Order

Diana Agosta (dagosta@igc.org)



Upcoming Conference

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www.acm-ne.org

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Paul Congo, Executive Director of Access Monterey Peninsula, has spent over 25 years involved in community access television, and along the way, he learned what it takes to succeed in this broadcast field.

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Paul Congo,
Executive Director,
Access Monterey Peninsula



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